



**PARKS AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
September 26, 2023**

The Parks and Public Works Committee met for Regular Committee Meeting at 10:00 a.m.  
Saugatuck City Hall  
102 Butler St., Saugatuck, MI 49453.

**Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Baldwin at 10:00 a.m.

**Attendance:**

Present: Chair Baldwin, Committee members DeJong, Johnson, Kimble, & Roche.

Absent: Committee member Charak.

Others Present: City Manager Heise, DPW Superintendent Herbert, DPW Assistant Supervisor Hardy, Deputy Clerk & DPW Admin. Asst. Williams

**Approval of Agenda:**

*Motion by DeJong, second by Kimble, to approve the agenda for September 26, 2023. Via voice vote, motion carried 4-0.*

**Approval of Minutes from 8/22/23:**

*Motion by Roche, second by Johnson, to approve the minutes from the August 22, 2023, meeting. Via voice vote, motion carried 4-0.*

**Guest Speaker:** None.

**Public Comments (agenda items only):** None.

**Review/Discussion:**

**A. Department of Public Works and Administrative Updates:**

DPW Superintendent Herbert said that the roof on the Mount Baldhead pavilion and the restroom has been replaced. His staff has been working on pressure washing the pavilion at Mt. Baldhead park. He is happy with the little bit of progress made there. He had a really nice meeting this morning regarding road construction projects. Krohn Excavating is in town working on Taylor, Takken, East, West, & North Maple Streets and progress is coming along nicely. This includes the

addition of storm sewers on Takken and Taylor Streets. He said that when they get excavators or contractors like that in town, they don't let them leave without adding some smaller items to their list. A couple of small items that they have talked about with Krohn is some exterior work at City Hall that will address the drainage off of the roof. They need to tie the rain gutters into the storm drain out front. They will need to tear up the old concrete to do it completely right, which is a massive project. Some of the work may have to be bumped to spring of 2024. One other small item over at the intersection of Maple and Mason, there is somewhat of a makeshift spillway going down into the street. Krohn's working right across the street from us and they are asking them to build a more professional spillway for that area. He said that the construction project should be wrapping up by the end of November. Herbert also announced big news for Department of Public Works. They hired an equipment operator/Oval beach manager that started this week. They are rolling up their sleeves getting him familiar with the current operation that exists today and all of the safety procedures that need to be falling into place before next season. This is a critical role, and they couldn't be happier to have Noah Aramendi join the team.

## **B. Study Group Updates:**

### a. Invasive Species:

Committee member Roche said that on September 18, they took sixty-eight 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade students out to pull vines and plant beach grass. The students pulled over 100 vines and planted 600 square feet of beach grass. They had parent leaders help out and it went really well. (Most of recording audio is inaudible.)

City Manager Heise added that the hemlock woolly adelgid treatment was a huge project that was recently completed. This was a \$42,000 investment for the City.

### b. Airport Property:

Chair Baldwin said that they have gotten through the engineering and ODC studies. The next step is to get a SOAR analysis with the ODC. She would like to have a special meeting for that before the next meeting so that next month when they meet, they can take a motion to Council to legitimize the trails. City Manager Heise added that one of the outcomes is that one of the opportunities of SOAR is to groom the trail. He says that once you get the opportunity for the community to support that, and once it goes in front of Council you will be in a better position to allow the Council to expend funds to do that.

### c. Blue Star Multimodal Path:

Committee member Kimble said that she is underwhelmed with the recent progress. City Manager Heise said that Nancy has done a great job bird dogging them, which he appreciates. Soon they will be coming to the PPW Committee for a discussion on a few design elements for the Blue Star Trail pallet sign. They are working on a couple of options, as the City has requested three different options, and he says that they are aware of sensitivities with the pallet sign. They are talking about shifting it a couple of feet in one direction. He thinks there are opportunities to actually enhance the area with the landscape. One idea is to have half of

the Blue Star Trail to go under the pallet sign, so they are looking at the human height standards there are for a multimodal path. He said that there are other locations that they could use for the banners that are usually placed on the pallet sign. Another item the group will be working on would be the vertical elements of the bridge and how that can be changed without taking away any of the views of the water. He said that will be another point of sensitivity. The other thing will be the vegetation near the bridge, from Lake Street to the bridge, which has to be removed & replaced. It could be a denser vegetation to help out the condos pointing towards the end as far as the visual barrier. These will be the type of things that are going to come in front of this group.

d. Village Square:

Committee members DeJong said that they are excited to move ahead and actually make some recommendations to council, but they wanted the Committee to know that they have done their research, so they shared a minute and a half video about their research. She said that the goal for today's meeting was to give the group an advanced organizer, they want to recommend the decommissioning of the playground, hopefully choose a new playground design, and proceed to recommend that to City Council for purchase. She said that if they don't move now, they will miss out on some opportunities for grants, but also on the timeline for it to be manufactured and installed. After going over the details of both design options, they decided to make a motion to take this to City Council.

*Motion by DeJong to take this to the next level. Motion failed as there was not a second. Committee deliberation continued.*

*Motion by DeJong, second by Kimble, to bring to City Council that the current playground be decommissioned as soon as possible or when DPW has time, and that they move forward with accepting the renderings and cost quotes from Sinclair. Via voice vote, the motion carried 4-0.*

d. Park Street & Mount Baldhead:

Committee Member Johnson said that their group had no reason to meet other than she was going to mention that they got the John Woollam trail sign, which is good. She also wanted to bring up to Nick Masters that they would like to go to the north side of Park Street but thinks that is going to entail a whole different group.

City Manager Heise said that Consumers Energy had informed him that they were going to start burying their power lines on Park Street, which also means that any telecommunications or anything on their poles or telephone poles would also have to be dropped into the ground. He did reach out to Consumers to get an update but has not heard anything from them as of yet. He still needs a schedule or a timeline for when they will begin the project. He will update the committee once he has more information.

### **C. Tri-Community Parks & Recreation Master Plan Update:**

Committee Member DeJong said that she attended the public forum last Thursday for the Tri-Community Parks & Recreation Five-Year Plan in place of Helen Baldwin. She said that there were four tables set-up one for each of the entities: Saugatuck City, Saugatuck Township, City of Village of Douglas, and Saugatuck School District. She said that they need to emphasize stewardship as much as recreation because there seems to be a lot of focus on the recreation part of it. They have a lot of assets already that they need to pay attention to such as the Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area that they spent a lot of money to acquire and now it seems to be taken over by invasives, it's especially barbary. The tree men are looking at what is happening there. They need more signage to stay on the trails and stay off of the critical dune parts. They talked about "Leave No Trace", and they need stronger designations. She said there are different designations, but you can have natural rivers, environmental areas, and cultural landscapes that would add some amount of protections in different ways. Once you have a designation it adds protection when people try to do things that you don't want. DeJong says that as they talk about conservation and things like that, they need to consider a land acquisition tax similar to the fire tax, or it could be an additional tax, or the Township simply refers to theirs as their Parks & Rec millage. This tax could be used for land acquisition. There were a lot of discussion about the airport property, most of the discussion was about disturbing the area but there was a lot of support for opening up the existing trails, even the people with concerns seemed to be okay with that. She spent a lot of time talking to Ken Butler and Jim Searing who are on the Township Parks Commission who are interested as they are opening up their dog park trails. The Saugatuck Cross County team is going to hold its first home meet in years and it is not big enough so they will have to go several rounds around the park. This led to a conversation about how they could integrate the airport property and then the conversation pivoted to the landfill property because that is now available. Butler and Searing brought up possibly having a cross country trail that goes around the landfill area, which DeJong thinks is a better idea and is still accommodating but would not be on the airport property itself. There was a guy from a Mountain Biking Association there and he would like some trails opened up for mountain biking again, which she was trying to steer him away from the airport property and suggested that the landfill property may be a good spot for them. He told her that they raise dollars and that they pay to develop flight trips locally so that could be a source of funding if they decided to do it. A few other things were mentioned such as wheelchair access to Oval Beach, and then a local Evergreen Commons.

### **Review Next Steps:**

Chair Baldwin said they spoke about the three way stops on Park street and she would like to get that taken to a City Council workshop. She is excited for the next steps and wants to make sure that they get that scheduled appropriately.

## Member Closing Comments:

- Chris Clark – Saugatuck Township
  - Comments regarding a program with the History Center called “History Lives Here”. Would love for the committee to explore some signage directed towards a younger audience with bigger text and less words. They are usually funded by donations.
  - Requests that the committee put on the next agenda the idea of designating, marking the existing trails, and encouraging people to stay on the trails in the Tallmadge Woods, Mount Baldhead Park, Crow’s Nest Trail, Fish Trail, and Water Tower areas. He would be happy to help in any way he can, and he has maps of the trails that he can share with them.
- Lisa Mize – Executive Director of CVB in Douglas & Saugatuck
  - She had the opportunity to meet with Kelly & Glenna and they gave her a sneak peak of the renderings for Village Square playground. She thinks it is amazing and loves what they are doing. She thanked them and said that it is long overdue. She is in support of what they have done.
- Nick Masters – Holiday Hill
  - With this Park Street initiative, especially the bottleneck in front of their property at Holiday Hill, Jon Moxey and Scott Herbert stopped by the property today and all three of them have expressed some real concern with the erosion that is happening underneath the street here as well as the hillside. That is going to take a lot of exploring, discussions, and thinking going forward. He just wants the committee to keep that on the radar and remind them that they are willing to help in any capacity from their end.

Committee Member Johnson – Thanked Glenna and Kelly for the great presentation. She thinks it is going to be really exciting to have something for kids of all ages to use. She says that getting the designs done for the bike route is key so they can move on with that but thinks it was a good meeting. She says that she agrees with Nick Masters but thinks that is going to take a lot of time to revisit that.

Committee Member Kimble – She really feels like the group is starting to show some results. She is hoping that they will have some real results on the Blue Star Trail soon. They did ask C2AE if they could give them some renderings of what the landscaping was going to look like and that kind of thing with the goal as far as the sign of, they are not tearing the sign down, they are ultimately going to make it better.

Committee Member DeJong – She thanked fellow committee members for supporting the playground project. She said that it has been great working with Kelly, they have had a lot of fun and it has been a lot of work, but they will continue. She mentioned that the new State representative Joey Andrews had a great session a few weeks ago at the library where he hosted a town hall about short-term rentals. He said that as he was campaigning, that was the top concern along the lakeshore. He took this on as a project and is putting together a bill and working with some others on short-term rentals.

They would like to leave most of the control to the local municipalities but to offer help to the municipalities. She explained that in some other states they collect an additional sales tax which is not allowed in Michigan at this time. They are going to put an extra amenity tax in the draft for short-term rentals. Part of that tax (around 1%) would pay to create a statewide database where everybody has to register. If they are renting short-term and aren't registered now, they would force them to register. Now the police will have a database that if they receive a complaint and the owner does not have the property registered, the police would be able to shut them down. As of now, they do not have that capability. She said that the exciting part is that the other money goes back to the local communities. It would go to the CVB's, and they are working on the language of their charter, and they have a purview of what they can do to expand it from just marketing local areas to also investing in housing for workers. She said that Joey was back in the area last Friday for a fundraiser and she went to that meeting. She asked Andrews if that money could also be interpreted as land conservancy or purchasing land that might be conserved. He said that he thinks a case could be made for that in the language. She then asked if they could make the language explicit so they don't have to make the case and would be able to just do it. She says that she will need a follow-up meeting with him on that. She told the committee that if anyone else thinks that it is a good idea, it might be something to follow-up with Joey on because she thinks that it would be a good source of revenue and for some of this land purchase that they're talking about.

Committee Member Roche – She thanked everyone for their support and confidence, and thanked Glenna as the playground was a huge project. They really put a lot of thought and heart into it and are very excited to see it come to fruition and then for the group to have a project move forward so that everyone else can see how great the dynamic of the group and how they work together and care about the community to move things forward and make it better.

Chair Baldwin – She thanked everyone for their hard work and said that it is incredible what Glenna and Kelly have been able to accomplish within a short period of time. She knows it has been a labor of love, but it is still a lot of labor, and it doesn't go unnoticed. Baldwin says that she is excited to take this to council and she knows that it is not going to be the easiest thing in the world, but it will be worth it, and Saugatuck is worth it. She welcomes everyone to attend the Council meeting.

**Adjournment:**

*Motion by DeJong, second by Roche, to approve adjournment of the meeting. Via voice vote, motion carried 4-0. Chairwoman Baldwin adjourned at 11:15 p.m.*

Respectfully Submitted,

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Sara Williams, City Deputy Clerk & DPW Administrative Assistant