



**PARKS AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - SPECIAL
March 15, 2024**

The Parks and Public Works Committee met for Special 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, Kimble & Roche.

Absent: Committee members Charak & Johnson.

Others Present: Interim City Manager Cummings, DPW Superintendent Herbert, Deputy Clerk Williams.

Motion by Roche, second by Kimble to excuse the absence of Committee members Charak & Johnson. Upon voice vote, motion carried 3-0.

Approval of Agenda:

Motion by Roche, second by Kimble, to approve the agenda for March 15, 2024. Via voice vote, motion carried 3-0.

Approval of Minutes from 1/23/24:

Motion by Johnson, second by DeJong, to approve the minutes from January 23, 2024, meeting. Via voice vote, motion carried 3-0.

Public Comments (agenda items only):

Ken Butler (Saugatuck Parks & Rec Commission):

- Advocated for using the closed landfill site as a walking and running trail, highlighting the need for a home meet for the Saugatuck High School Cross Country Team.
- Researched and found a report from the EPA that is dated September 13, 1990. Report indicated that the dump was closed in 1984. This year marks the 40th anniversary since the dump has been closed. He also found an engineering report from 1996 that was forwarded to Saugatuck Township which indicated there were toxins in the wells. They reinvestigated

- the dump site to see if it was the source for the leaking to these wells. The report indicated that there was not any contamination coming from the dump site.
- Discussed a history problem related to the landfill site, which is owned by Saugatuck Township, City of Saugatuck, and the City of the Village of Douglas.
 - Located an agreement between the three communities from 1967 that references their collaboration on the landfill site.
 - Asked the commission to adopt a resolution recommending to the City of Saugatuck to pass the resolution supporting the development of a walking/running trail at the landfill site.

Review/Discussion:

A. Department of Public Works and Administrative Updates:

- Discussed leasing out the Oval Beach concession stand, the purchase of an asphalt hotbox reclaimer, and renovating Village Square playground.
- Went over the seasonal staffing, Oval Beach preparations, and tree care in the city.
- Plans to conduct a site assessment of a mature oak tree with an arborist on a vacant lot at 254 Francis Street to determine potential root damage from construction.
- Recognized Sara Williams for her efforts in securing a donation of a floating wheelchair for Oval Beach with Holly Harvey from the Disability Network Lakeshore, which will promote accessibility for people with disabilities.
- Provided updates on various city projects, including the reconstruction of Bridge Street and crack sealing of city streets.
- Discussed plans for Arbor Day celebration.
- DSI Grant awarded to the city for \$221,000 that satisfies the requirement imposed by the State of Michigan in which they have to do inventory of all the water service lines going into the individual households and the city to ensure they are not made of lead. Grant should cover costs.
- Two-phase project on exterior at City Hall where they will tear out concrete that is in rough shape, connect the gutters to the catch basin in the front of the building, new concrete, replacing the irrigation around the building, and some landscaping updates.

B. Further review of Pallet Sign Design for Blue Star Multimodal Path:

The city is reviewing the design of the Pallet Sign and the Bluestar multimodal path. Interim City Manager Cummins thanked Kimball for her expertise and shared an update on the trail design, including changes made based on feedback from the last meeting. Committee Member Kimball added additional context and history on the project. Jared Secor from C2AE shared updated renderings incorporating feedback on hardscape and stone elements, with options for banner placement.

The Committee discussed the potential costs of improving the intersection with signals, which would not be covered by the grants. Cummins discussed the traffic signal and said that the City Council had approved a General Services Agreement for design engineering for the Pallet Sign and a digital traffic signal for this intersection. The City worked with city engineer Fleis & Vandenbrink on

a study a few years ago and their finding was that there was a need for a traffic signal. Allegan County Road Commission also did a study that found that the traffic warrants met the criteria for a signal, but the crash warrants did not. However, they said that if a trail were constructed to this area, they would recommend a traffic signal. Kimble mentioned the curvature of the intersection and the potential to extend it to accommodate trucks, with some work having been done on the numbers and the possibility of accommodating the existing dollars for the project. Secor noted the discoloration in concrete from damage from trucks turning at that intersection as it doesn't meet MDOT standards for a semi-truck turn radius. He said that it may be time to rethink making that turn radius compliant and moving things around to not only protect the trail traffic but the new landscape design as well. The City is on the hook for cost of the traffic signal, as Friends of the Blue Star Trail has put in as much money as they had available for this project and felt like the signal was already needed without the construction of the new trail. Cummins said with the cost of the trail and the roadway improvements, they have estimates ranging from \$316,000 to \$403,000 depending on the option chosen. They aim to limit additional cost by doing the roadway and trail work simultaneously, rather than as standalone projects. There were safety concerns raised for the new trail at that intersection with the potential for serious injury.

The Committee discussed the rendering options for moving the sign, including using natural local materials and incorporating plants in the area. Herbert expressed concern about limited space at the intersection and the potential impact on the whole layout of the project. Secor explained that the rendering is just a visual representation and can be modified to incorporate the WB67 turn radius to make it compliant, but this would increase the cost of option three. He explained that the new rendering doesn't show the turn radius due to limitations in the original packet, but the original packet does show the additional fill and location of the new retaining wall and how much area you have to work with back there.

Kimble mentioned that some construction costs are coming in lower than anticipated, which could allow funds for the expanded turning radius, additional landscape improvements, without incurring additional costs for the City. The City would still be responsible for funding the traffic signal and maybe some sprucing up of the pallet sign or improvements.

Secor explained that the environmental reviews from NEPA and SHPO could take up to four weeks, but as long as the decision is made to proceed with the design, they can move forward within the next month or so. Cummins said if the committee is comfortable that they have been presented with enough information to make a recommendation on which design option to select for the trail project, it would need to go to the HDC and then ultimately, the City Council to make a decision. Chair Baldwin expressed her concern about the amount of space required for the project, specifically for truck turnaround, and requests a motion be made that is subject to a Fleis & VandenBrink review. Herbert agrees to work with F&B to address the issue and provide a solution by the March 26th meeting. Kimble and DeJong discuss the committee's purview and the interrelatedness of the items on the agenda. The group discussed the design of the sign and the radius of the traffic light, with some members expressing concerns about moving forward without all of the necessary information. Secor suggested updating the plan to include the new rendering

features and clarifying costs, including a potential additional \$200,000 for traffic signal installation and design.

C. Cross Country Trails at Old Landfill:

Chair Baldwin said there is proposal from Saugatuck Township to lease the landfill space for cross country trails which has support from the schools and the township. Cummins explained that the City Council sets priorities for the year, and this was not on the immediate list that was set forth for this year and any additional work on the site by spending staff time and resources would require their action. Cummins said that the engineers indicated that trails could be possible, but more testing is needed to ensure no additional methane is present and to address concerns about the cap and soil contaminants. Baldwin suggested a motion to allocate staff time to evaluate leasing the landfill to Saugatuck Township for cross country trails.

Motion by Roche, second by DeJong to allow the Saugatuck City staff to evaluate steps to lease the landfill to Saugatuck Township for the purpose of establishing and maintaining cross country trails for Saugatuck Public Schools. Following voice vote, motion carried 3-0.

D. Updates on Saugatuck Natural Harbor Area:

Committee Member Roche discussed the Saugatuck Natural Harbor area endowment fund, which needs to be updated every five years to be in compliance with the management Plan. It has not been updated since 2015. The Committee plans to move forward with the Land Conservancy of West Michigan to update the plan and address compliance issues. Chair Baldwin discussed establishing a board to manage \$195,000 in funds for Wayfinding, invasives, and other projects. Cummins seeks clarity on Saugatuck Natural Harbor Area's board's dissolution and fund management.

E. Updates on Uniform Signage Initiative with Tri-Community:

Committee member Roche said that the Tri-Community is working on improving connectivity between parks and trails between the three municipalities. On March 19th, the steering committee, and the city councils for the three municipalities will meet and educate themselves on safety and universal language for better communication and collaboration.

F. Updates on Conservation Levels with Register of Deeds and LC of WM:

The Committee discusses the need to update records for city property and conservation levels. They are working on creating a master document with all city properties, including parks and parcel numbers, to provide clarity on city ownership and avoid questions in the future. Roche highlighted the importance of understanding easements and their ownership, particularly in the Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area, to ensure proper conservation and management of city assets. Baldwin mentioned the importance of documenting historical knowledge and memories to prevent them from fading away. DPW Superintendent Herbert suggests consulting with Fleis and VandenBrink on the data management aspect.

G. Study Group Updates:

1. Invasive Species:

Committee member Roche said that they teamed with eighth-grade students last year to attack invasive species at Mount Baldhead. They would like to continue to collaborate with the eighth-grade students to do work in the area. Cummins mentioned that the contractor that has been doing the milfoil treatment will be at the April 3rd workshop meeting to answer questions, advise on how the treatments have been going, and what to expect for the summer whether the treatments will continue. He said that the water levels are down and there may be some additional concerns and there is other vegetation too that could impact the waterways.

2. Airport Property:

Committee member DeJong discussed a donor that wants to donate \$130,000 to improve the airport property in memory of their father. This is to develop hiking trails with signage, conservation overlay, and habitat restoration in a sensitive area. Baldwin said that it has already been presented to Council and they are aware that the donor is only interested in donating to that specific property. Cummins explained the next steps are to bring it to a Council workshop to see if there is interest in continuing discussions with this donor and that project or the consequences of going in a different direction.

3. Blue Star Multimodal Path:

None. Already covered earlier in meeting.

4. Village Square:

Committee member Roche said that volunteers were still needed for the April 15-17 community build for the new playground in Saugatuck, with lunch being provided. Herbert mentions that site prep for the park project is complete, and he is excited to see the equipment with the little critters within the composite materials. He also discussed the vendor's prep work for the park project, including building out equipment for safety purposes and mulching out excess material.

5. Park Street & Mount Baldhead Improvements:

DPW Superintendent Herbert mentions erosion issues on Holiday Hill and pedestrian safety improvements in the Chain Ferry area. Cummins provided an update on AT&T's plans for burying lines in the area, stating that they are waiting on a further State Historic Preservation Office review.

Review Next Steps: None.

Public Comments (Limit 3 mins):

- **Joe Leonatti (712 Allegan):** Emphasized the importance of conducting a cost-benefit analysis before making decisions about the airport property.
- **Dan Fox (1006 Elizabeth):** Expressed interest in the potential cross-country trails leasing to the township. He wondered if the DPW site would be grandfathered. He thinks it is worth taking a look at what is in the EPA report because it opens the door for liability. Fox suggested a potential backup plan for the intersection by turning the trail and adding flashing red lights at an existing pedestrian crossing. He also raised concerns about the dangerous left turn onto Blue Star Highway from the intersection and suggests that a no left turn sign be installed.
- **Russ Gardner (245 Spear):** Emphasized the importance of evaluating the airport property for best use by the city before considering any donations or development.

Member Closing Comments:

- **Committee Member Kimble** – She thought it was a great meeting. She has had discussions with her neighbors about the horrible road conditions and wonders why they are so bad.
- **Committee Member DeJong** – She thinks there was a lot of progress in today’s meeting. She is happy that the airport property is one of several properties that are on the list of the things that they are looking at. She says if they are conserved, she wonders why they wouldn’t do that with every property such as Mount Baldhead, Oval Beach, and Village Square.
- **Committee Member Roche** – She thanked everyone on the committee for all of their time and effort and thanked DeJong for working with the donors. There are a lot of people who love this community, and she thinks that that they should be proactive instead of reactive and be able to understand the direction they are headed and have their priorities straight, then people will want to give. She is excited about the playground and looks forward to seeing everyone on April 15-17.
- **Chair Baldwin** – She closed by letting everyone on the committee know how much she appreciates their work. She said that she is an elected council member and thinks that she signed up to take a little more abuse than most of them do. She thinks the committee is becoming aware of how it can be trying at times. The playground has not been without its very vocal criticism, airport property, and all the things that they work hard to achieve. That is part of democracy. She is happy to have the pushback and the criticism that makes them all better and is happy that they are making good progress.

Adjournment:

Motion by Roche, second by Kimble, to approve adjournment of the meeting. Via voice vote, motion carried unanimously. Chair Baldwin adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Williams, City Deputy Clerk & DPW Administrative Assistant