



REGULAR MEETING OF THE BUCHANAN CITY COMMISSION
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2026 – 7:00 PM
CHAMBER OF BUCHANAN CITY HALL - 302 N REDBUD TRAIL, BUCHANAN MI

MINUTES

I. Public Hearing No. 1

A. Call to Order: Public Hearing No. 1

Mayor Weedon called the Public Hearing to order at 7:00 pm.

B. Roll Call

Present: Weedon, Vigansky, Money, and George

Absent: Swem

C. Open Public Hearing No.1

Motion made by Money, supported by George, to open Public Hearing No. 1. Motion carried unanimously.

D. The purpose of the public hearing is to receive public comment regarding proposed ordinance 2026.09/455, Workforce Housing Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) Ordinance. The proposed ordinance would establish a process through which qualifying workforce housing developments or rehabilitation projects may receive an exemption from ad valorem property taxes and instead pay an annual service charge in lieu of those taxes.

E. Public Comment-Speakers shall come to the podium, state their name, direct comments to the City Commission, and limit comments to the subject of the public hearing; comments may be limited to three (3) minutes per speaker, and all persons wishing to speak will be given an opportunity to do so.

No public comments were made.

F. Close of Public Hearing No. 1

Motion made by Vigansky, supported by Money, to close Public Hearing No. 1 at 7:01 pm. Motion carried unanimously.

II. Public Hearing No. 2

A. Call to Order: Public Hearing No. 2

Mayor Weedon called to order Public Hearing No. 2 at 7:02 pm.

B. Roll Call

Present: Weedon, Vigansky, Money, and George

Absent: Swem

C. Opening Public Hearing No. 2

Motion made by George, supported by Vigansky to open Public Hearing No.2. Motion carried unanimously.

- D. *Statement of Purpose- The purpose of this public hearing is to receive comments regarding proposed amendments to the City of Buchanan Unified Development Code (UDC), including the following ordinances:*

Ordinance No. 2026.10/456 – Map Amendment (Rezoning), East Third Street and Skyline Drive – N Natural to I Industrial.

Ordinance No. 2026.10/457 – Unified Development Code Amendment – Downtown Design Review Overlay District.

Ordinance No. 2026.10/458 – Unified Development Code Amendment – Fencing, Lighting, Screening and Landscaping Standards.

Ordinance No. 2026.10/459 – Unified Development Code Amendment – Sign Standards.

Public comment will be taken separately for each proposed ordinance.

- E. *Public Comment-Speakers shall come to the podium, state their name, direct comments to the City Commission, and limit comments to the subject of the public hearing; comments may be limited to three (3) minutes per speaker, and all persons wishing to speak will be given an opportunity to do so.*

1) Public Comment- Ordinance No. 2026.10/456

No public comments were made.

2) Public Comment- Ordinance No. 2026.10/457

No public comments were made.

3) Public Comment- Ordinance No. 2026.10/458

No public comments were made.

4) Public Comment- Ordinance No. 2026.10/459

Written correspondence from William Bielby, as well as comments in person (written correspondence on file).

William Bielby, co-owner of Rivertown Gallery and Studio, 111 Main Street, provided comments regarding Ordinance 2026.10/459. Bielby expressed support for moving the ordinance forward in its present form. He clarified his previous comments regarding the 80-inch clearance standard for hanging signs and stated that his concern involved whether a lower hanging device could eventually be permitted when an appropriate cane-detectable barrier prevents pedestrians from walking beneath it. He supported continued review of that issue separately while allowing the current sign ordinance amendment to proceed.

- F. *Close of Public Hearing No. 2*

Motion made by Money, supported by Vigansky, to close Public Hearing No. 2 at 7:06 pm. Voice vote carries unanimously.

III. Recognition

IV. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

V. Invocation

Pastor David Mitchell of Faith Victory Fellowship provided the invocation.

VI. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Mark Weedon; Commissioners Dan Vigansky, Larry Money, and Raquell George

Absent: Mayor Pro Tem Patrick Swem

City Staff: City Manager Tony McGhee, City Clerk Kalla Langston-Weiss, Community Development and Planning Director Kristen Gundersen, and Director of Public Services Mike Baker

VII. Approve Agenda

Motion by Vigansky, supported by George, to approve the agenda as presented. Voice votes carry unanimously.

VIII. Public Comment - Agenda Items Only (3-minute limit)

IX. Consent Agenda (can be approved all in one motion, for general housekeeping items)

A. Buchanan Harvest Fest Street Closure Request -Consider approval of the Buchanan Area Chamber of Commerce's amended request for temporary street closures on October 3, 2026, for Buchanan Harvest Fest, including Front Street between Redbud Trail and Oak Street, Main Street from Dewey Street to Front Street, and the requested portion of Days Avenue. The requested closure time is revised to begin at 12:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

B. Minutes- Consider the Regular Meeting Minutes and Closed Session Meeting Minutes from September 14th, 2026.

C. Buchanan Track and Field Boosters Special Event Permit - Consider approval of a Special Event Permit for the Buchanan Track and Field Boosters Fundraiser to be held on November 13 and 14, 2026, at the McCoy Creek Recreation Area, utilizing the same course used by the school cross-country team.

Motion made by Vigansky, supported by Money, to approve the Consent Agenda, as presented. Voice votes carry unanimously.

X. Scheduled Matters from the Floor (if any)

XI. Reports by: Departments, Committees, Boards

XII. Unfinished Business

A. Ordinance 2026.09/455- Consider the 2nd reading and enactment of Ordinance 2026.09/455, a Workforce Housing Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) Ordinance.

McGhee explained that the ordinance is intended to support workforce housing for households that do not qualify for traditional affordable housing programs but may not be able to afford current market-rate housing. The PILOT program provides qualifying developments with a predictable annual service charge based on rental income in lieu of traditional property taxes.

Motion by Commissioner Money, supported by Commissioner George, to approve the second reading and enact Ordinance 2026.09/455, Workforce Housing Payment in Lieu of Taxes. Motion carried 4-0.

B. Unified Development Code Amendments – Second Reading and Scheduling of Second Public Hearing

Consider the second reading of the following proposed amendments to the City of Buchanan Unified Development Code and schedule the second public hearing for October 26, 2026:

- 1) Ordinance No. 2026.10/456 – Map Amendment (Rezoning), East Third Street and Skyline Drive – N Natural to I Industrial.

Staff explained that the property was previously industrially zoned and was inadvertently designated N-Natural during an earlier zoning map update. The proposed amendment would restore the I-Industrial designation. Staff stated that the change would not impact the existing trail and that the property's topography makes future development unlikely.

Motion made by George, supported by Vigansky, to approve the first reading of Ordinance 2026.10/456, rezoning the subject property from N-Natural to I-Industrial, and schedule the second public hearing for October 26, 2026. Roll call votes carry unanimously.

- 2) Ordinance No. 2026.10/457 – Downtown Design Review Overlay District.

Staff reviewed the proposed amendments, which provide additional structure and consistency for the City's downtown design review process. The ordinance establishes the Downtown Design Review Overlay District, clarifies the purpose and review process, renames the Design Review Committee, establishes the Planning Commission as the appeal body, and provides standards for reviewing applications. Commissioners thanked staff, the Planning Commission, and the Design Review Committee for their work on the proposed amendments.

Motion by Commissioner Vigansky, supported by Money, to approve the first reading of Ordinance 2026.10/457, amending the Unified Development Code regarding the Downtown Design Review Overlay District, and schedule the second public hearing for October 26, 2026. Roll call votes carry unanimously.

- 3) Ordinance No. 2026.10/458 – Fencing, Lighting, Screening and Landscaping Standards.

Staff explained that the amendment cleans up conflicting and unclear language in the Unified Development Code. Changes include permitting chain-link fencing in certain side and rear yards, clarifying fencing requirements, establishing lighting standards, and revising landscaping and tree-related requirements to make them more practical and understandable.

Motion by Commissioner Money, supported by Vigansky, to approve the first reading of Ordinance 2026.10/458, amending the Unified Development Code regarding fencing, lighting, screening, and landscaping standards, and schedule the second public hearing for October 26, 2026. Roll call votes carry unanimously.

- 4) Ordinance No. 2026.10/459 – Sign Standards.

Staff explained that the amendment addresses inconsistencies and unintended consequences discovered following adoption of the Unified Development Code and more clearly identifies exempt and regulated signs and applicable dimensional standards.

Motion by Commissioner Vigansky, supported by Commissioner Money, to approve the first reading of Ordinance 2026.10/459, amending the Unified Development Code regarding sign standards, and schedule the second public hearing for October 26, 2026. Roll call vote carry unanimously.

- C. **Support for Buchanan Area Senior Center Millage Funding Distribution-** Consider approval of a letter to the Berrien County Board of Commissioners supporting the Buchanan Area Senior Center's position that the current equal seven-way distribution of Berrien County senior center millage funding remain in place.

The Commission considered a letter to the Berrien County Board of Commissioners supporting the Buchanan Area Senior Center's position that the current equal seven-way distribution of Berrien County Senior Center Millage funding remain in place. McGhee explained that the letter followed the presentation made by Senior Center representatives at the previous City Commission meeting.

Motion by Money, supported by George, to approve the letter to the Berrien County Board of Commissioners supporting the Buchanan Area Senior Center's position that the current equal

seven-way distribution of Berrien County Senior Center Millage funding remain in place. Roll call votes carry unanimously.

XIII. New Business

- A. FY 2027 Lead Service Line Replacement- Engineering Service Agreement** - Consider approval of the Professional Services Agreement with Prein & Newhof, Inc. for engineering design, bidding assistance, and construction-phase services related to the City's FY 2027 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) Lead Service Line Replacement Project. The project is anticipated to replace approximately 200 lead/galvanized water service lines throughout the City. The Commission considered a professional services agreement with Prein & Newhof for engineering design, bidding assistance, and construction-phase services associated with the City's FY 2027 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Lead Service Line Replacement Project. City Manager McGhee stated that the project is anticipated to replace approximately 200 lead or galvanized water service lines, with the initial work focused primarily in the Liberty Heights area. Funding is anticipated through a State Revolving Fund loan at zero percent interest over 40 years with 10% principal forgiveness.
- Motion made by George, supported by Vigansky, to approve the Professional Services Agreement with Prein & Newhof, Inc. for engineering design, bidding assistance, and construction-phase services for the FY 2027 DWSRF Lead Service Line Replacement Project. Roll call votes carry unanimously.*
- B. Re-Award of 2026 General Paving Work** – Consider re-awarding the 2026 general paving work to Astrong Construction in an amount not to exceed \$125,000, with the City providing traffic control during the work. The revised proposal would allow the paving work, including Alexander Street and several other locations, to be completed during the remaining 2026 paving season rather than being delayed until spring 2027. Staff further recommends authorizing the City Manager to execute the necessary contract documents and close out the prior award to Rieth-Riley Construction.
- McGhee explained that the contractor originally awarded the project would not be able to complete the work during the 2026 paving season. Because of the condition of Alexander Street and the risk of additional deterioration over the winter, staff negotiated with A Strong Construction to complete the work during the current paving season while remaining within budget.
- Motion by Money, supported by George, to re-award the 2026 General Paving Work to A Strong Construction in an amount not to exceed \$125,000, authorize the City to provide traffic-control materials during the work, authorize the City Manager to execute the necessary contract documents, and close out the prior award. Roll call votes carry unanimously.*
- C. Introduction of Ordinance No. 2026.11/460, Map Amendment (Rezoning), 1106 Victory Street-** Consider introduction of Ordinance No. 2026.11/460, a proposed map amendment to rezone the City-owned property located at 1106 Victory Street from N Natural to NE Neighborhood Edge, and direct staff to schedule the public hearing and first reading for October 26, 2026, following Planning Commission review and recommendation. The Commission considered the introduction of Ordinance 2026.11/460, a proposed map amendment to rezone the City-owned property located at 1106 Victory Street from N-Natural to NE-Neighborhood Edge.
- Staff explained that the vacant parcel had previously been designated for park/open-space purposes and that the rezoning would allow the property to be used for housing as part of development activity occurring on the City's north side.

Motion made by Money, supported by Vigansky, to introduce Ordinance 2026.11/460, a proposed map amendment to rezone 1106 Victory Street from N-Natural to NE-Neighborhood Edge, and direct staff to schedule the public hearing and first reading for October 26, 2026, following Planning Commission review and recommendation. Roll call votes carry unanimously.

D. Expenditures- Consider the expenditures in the amount of \$81,450.38

Motion made by Vigansky, supported by George, to approve the expenditures in the amount of \$81,450.38, as presented. Roll call votes carry unanimously.

XIV. Communications *(informational only, formal board action is not necessary for these items, unless so desired)*

XV. Public Comment - Non-Agenda Items Only *(3-minute limit)*

Dennis Morey, representing the Buchanan Business Boosters, announced a Halloween dance planned for October 31 for teens and tweens. He discussed planned activities, food, prizes, a DJ, decorations, and the closure of Main Street for the event.

Mary Gilbert addressed the Commission regarding City water rates. She asked commissioners seeking reelection what actions they had personally taken, or planned to take, to control or reduce future increases in water rates.

XVI. Executive Comments

A. City Manager Comments

City Manager McGhee reported New City Hall office hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. had begun. Residents had recently received fraudulent invoices appearing to be associated with City-related permits or activities. Staff would issue public information warning residents about the scam and emphasize that the City would not send invoices directing payment through unfamiliar online links. A City newsletter would begin being included with water bills to provide information on important dates, elections, seasonal services, and other City activities. Absentee ballots had been mailed for the upcoming election. Commissioners were reminded to sign the Buchanan Area Senior Center funding letter before leaving, with Commissioner Swem's signature to be obtained separately. McGhee also recognized Clerk Kalla Langston for her work administering elections.

B. Commissioner Comments

Commissioners discussed the question raised during public comment regarding water and sewer rates, infrastructure costs, past and current capital improvements, and efforts to reduce system costs and water loss.

Commissioner Vigansky addressed the question raised during public comment regarding water and sewer rates. He discussed the City's prior decision to implement annual rate increases, the high cost of replacing aging wastewater infrastructure, and the consequences of deferred maintenance. He stated that he has discussed the possibility of reducing or ending the annual increases with the City Manager but noted that doing so could delay infrastructure improvements needed.

Commissioner George announced the Buchanan Fire Department Blood Drive scheduled for October 16 from 1:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.; discussed an upcoming Feeding America mobile food distribution; and recognized RAM Love for its service to the community.

Commissioner Money thanked community members involved in local events and announced that he and other Buchanan-area veterans would be participating in an Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. He also announced a November 10 program at the Loading Dock for area veterans interested in learning more about the Honor Flight program.

City Manager McGhee reminded those present of the upcoming Chamber dinner at the Loading Dock.

C. Mayor Comments

Mayor Weedon discussed the importance of collective decision-making by the City Commission and ongoing investments in City infrastructure. He also noted reductions in the volume of water being unnecessarily treated following improvements to the City's infrastructure.

Mayor Weedon announced that Buchanan was one of four communities selected as finalists for a Michigan Municipal League community award and that representatives would make a presentation at the upcoming MML conference.

XVII. Adjourn

Motion made by Viganksy, supported by Money, to adjourn the meeting at 7:56 pm. Voice vote carries unanimously.

Kalla Langston-Weiss, City Clerk

Mayor Mark Weedon