



**CITY OF WALLED LAKE
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2026
7:30 P.M.**

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Mayor Gunther.

PLEDGE TO FLAG & INVOCATION

Invocation by Mayor Pro Tem O'Rourke.

ROLL CALL

Mayor Gunther, *Mayor Pro Tem O'Rourke, Council Member Ambrose, Council Member Arnold, *Council Member Loch, Council Member Schinzing, and Council Member Woods

OTHERS PRESENT

City Manager Whitt, Finance Director Pesta, Deputy Public Safety Director Shakinas, Deputy Police Chief Kolke, Fire Chief Gonzalez, DPW Superintendent Ladd, HR Director Sears, City Attorney Vanerian, and City Clerk Stuart

*Attended via electronically.

CM 01-04-26 MOTION TO EXCUSE COUNCIL MEMBER LOCH FROM TONIGHT'S MEETING

Motion by Woods, seconded by Schinzing, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED: To excuse Council Member Loch from tonight's meeting.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes (6) Ambrose, Arnold, O'Rourke, Schinzing, Woods, Gunther
Nays (0)
Absent (1) Loch
Abstain (0)

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

- 1. Regular Council Meeting Minutes of December 2, 2025 and Special Council Meeting Minutes of January 6, 2026**

CM 01-05-26 MOTION TO APPROVE REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 2, 2025 AND SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 6, 2026

Motion by O'Rourke, seconded by Ambrose, UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED: To approve the regular council meeting minutes of December 2, 2025 and Special Council Meeting Minutes of January 6, 2026.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes (6) Arnold, O'Rourke, Schinzing, Woods, Ambrose, Arnold, Gunther
Nayes (0)
Absent (0) Loch
Abstain (0)

PRESENTATION

1. Boss Engineering – Phase I Downtown Improvement Project

City Manager Whitt introduced Mr. Brent LaVanway, President of Boss Engineering, who provided a recap presentation on Phase I of the Downtown Improvement Project, focused on addressing ADA compliance requirements. Mr. LaVanway explained that the City received a Letter of Finding from the U.S. Department of Justice, placing the City on notice that certain downtown areas are not ADA compliant. Identified issues include accessibility concerns with ADA parking. In efforts to further improve the downtown accessible routes, street crossings, cross slopes, and streetscapes were reviewed. There was also the finding of an abandoned coal chute within the first block of the project area. Mr. LaVanway explained that in 2024, Boss Engineering was authorized to conduct a survey and preliminary engineering for the downtown area. Approval of a survey from Pontiac Trail to Hillcroft was received from both the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and City Council. Conceptual ideas have previously been presented to City Council, with the primary focus on improvements on accessibility. Preliminary engineering plans were provided in August 2025. Phase I encompasses the area from Walled Lake Drive to Pontiac Trail.

City Manager Whitt explained that portions of the project involve both city-owned and privately owned property. He said the coal chute exists in the project area and that easements or property acquisition may be required.

Mr. LaVanway confirmed that property lines extend approximately four feet into the proposed scope of work.

City Manager Whitt explained that although prior standards differed, the city must now address the identified deficiencies due to the DOJ Letter of Finding. He stated that this plan is intended to bring the downtown area into compliance. He further noted that Boss Engineering has worked with the city for many years, including engineering the city's parking lot.

Mr. LaVanway stated that the primary goal of Phase I is ADA compliance. He explained that most steps to businesses downtown will be removed, with limited exceptions at the Greenhouse and Walled Lake Tavern.

Council Member Schinzing clarified that all other steps would be removed.

Mr. LaVanway outlined proposed improvements, including ADA-compliant routes, improved street crossings, stormwater management, sidewalk improvements, angled parking and ADA parking spaces, crosswalks, planters for safety and aesthetics, selective tree removal, pavement

removal and replacement, retention of existing light poles, and gateway enhancements. He explained a secondary corridor plan conceptually extends east to Hillcroft.

Council Member Loch joined the meeting remotely at 8:10 p.m.

Council discussion followed regarding aggregate versus concrete materials, lifecycle costs, and the need for more detailed cost estimates. Coordination of sewer repair and replacement during construction was discussed as a means to reduce impacts on downtown businesses.

Mr. LaVanway explained that next steps would include approval of an engineering contract, progress meetings with staff, coordination with the County regarding signalization at the Pontiac Trail intersection, and preparation of a bidding package targeted for Winter 2026.

Council Member Schinzing asked whether Phase I is part of a larger master plan. Mr. LaVanway responded that Phase I has been developed, but subsequent phases have not yet been fully planned.

City Manager Whitt explained that while conceptual reviews have been conducted and the DDA focuses on downtown planning, Phase I is necessary to address the ADA complaint. He added that the DDA and City Council may also wish to discuss downtown façades as part of a broader effort.

Mayor Gunther explained that the city needs to establish consistent ordinances and codes and coordinate downtown development before proceeding further. He explained his concerns regarding angled parking removal, traffic flow, and whether a traffic study has been conducted, particularly related to turning movements onto Pontiac Trail.

Council Member Woods explained that council and businesses have consistently expressed the need for downtown improvements and parking. He emphasized walkability, accessibility, and business involvement in the planning process. He explained improvements can help drive downtown change. He cautioned against slowing progress.

City Manager Whitt stated that funding has not yet been approved. He explained that the DDA would need direction from City Council before determining its funding participation. He discussed potential use of a Special Assessment District (SAD), the need for preliminary plans to pursue funding, and possible property acquisition, which would require City Council approval. He recommended a joint meeting of the City Council, DDA, and Planning Commission.

Council members discussed the importance of being prepared with plans and engineering in order to compete for grant funding, referencing prior infrastructure projects.

City Attorney Vanerian explained that acquiring public right-of-way or easements would provide the city with the legal authority needed, to construct compliant sidewalks. He noted that cooperation is common but not guaranteed.

City Manager Whitt explained that administration would continue meeting with boards and commissions and provide updates at future meetings. He emphasized that moving forward with preparatory steps would not obligate the city to a final design and that council would retain authority to modify plans.

**CM 01-06-26 MOTION TO INSTRUCT THE CITY ATTORNEY TO ASSESS
AND PREPARE PROPERTY ACQUISITION DOCUMENTS FOR
FACILITATION OF PHASE I DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENTS**

Motion by Arnold, seconded by Ambrose, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To instruct the city attorney to assess and prepare property acquisition documents for facilitation of Phase I downtown improvements.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes (6) Arnold, O'Rourke, Schinzing, Woods, Ambrose, Gunther
Nays (0)
Absent (1) Loch
Abstain (0)

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Scott Bodolosky, 539 Winwood Circle – said he is a member of the clergy and a constitutional coach with the Patriot Academy. He said this year America celebrates 250-year anniversary. He said there are many activities going on throughout the country to celebrate this amazing milestone. He said he wants to work with local governments to have a celebration. He said he is a constitutional coach and has educational material he can provide on biblical citizenship in modern America, the Declaration of Independence, civic education, what and how a government functions, and much more. He offers in-person and video educational sessions.

Mayor Gunther agreed and said this is an amazing milestone and we really need to embrace this, do something nice, work with the library as they would be a great platform.

Council Member Ambrose said he agrees with education and the idea of working with the awesome library.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Gunther thanked the DPW, police and fire members for all their efforts during the recent snowstorm, great job. He asked Police Chief Shakinis for stats on the number of people the police responded to during that timeframe.

Police Chief Shakinis explained within 24 hours there were 14 accidents.

Mayor Gunther said the DPW took great care of our city streets. He asked why Oakland County Road Commission was absent.

City Manager Whitt explained there were three DPW staff members working continuously, Tim, Eric, and Chase. He explained the city's local roads were addressed. He said plowing during a snow event such as this, the city is not in the position to tend to county roads. He said Oakland County Road Commission finally tended to their obligations. City Manager Whitt said the city DPW team worked tirelessly during that storm, they received a compliment on how well and cautious the plowing was done. City Manager Whitt explained that the Oakland County Road Commission is independent of the city, we do not give the road commission any taxpayer funds, the road commission funds their activities. City Manager Whitt explained during that snow event, the city DPW did work on county roads, Maple Road and Pontiac Trail.

Mayor Gunther asked if Oakland County Road Commission was overwhelmed or did, they chose the service everybody else but Walled Lake. Mayor Gunther explained he received an email from a long-time resident who explained to him she appreciated the patience of city staff who answered the phone at the city offices explaining there are streets in the city that are not maintained by the city but the county, she appreciated the education. Mayor Gunther discussed another event that occurred during Christmas with a power outage in half the city. He asked if there is a plan of action for welfare checks. Mayor Gunther discussed if there is procedural packet with contact lists and numbers to provide to council during emergencies.

Council Member Woods explained there is information on the city website, a list of important contacts. He said DTE does also have an app that residents can download. Council Member Woods said how do you train people that are not aware of this. He explained one of our resources is our library, Library Director Ralston and staff host several educational events maybe this could be one of them, enhance the knowledge.

Mayor Gunther explained one of his first requests as mayor was an organizational chart, showing whose who, an electronic org chart available to all. He explained a chart posted at city hall providing pictures and titles of staff and who reports to who.

City Manager Whitt said there are organizational charts presented every year with the budget.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

City Manager Whitt explained council is not approving but making motion to receive and file, questions can be asked at any time before or after, explanations are always available.

1. Consent Agenda Written Departmental / Divisional Statistical Reports

- a. **Police**
- b. **Fire**
- c. **Finance**
 -Warrant
- d. **Code Enforcement**

**CM 01-07-26 MOTION TO APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA WRITTEN
DEPARTMENTAL AND DIVISIONAL STATISTICAL REPORTS**

Motion by Ambrose, seconded by Woods, UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED: To approve consent agenda written departmental and divisional statistical reports.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes (7) O'Rourke, Schinzing, Woods, Ambrose, Arnold, Loch, Gunther
Nays (0)
Absent (0)
Abstain (0)

2. Discussion on Strategic Budget Work Session Dates

City Manager Whitt explained budget discussions for fiscal year 2027 are coming up and these proposed dates are the start of that. City Manager Whitt said he is available to meet individually if necessary.

Mayor Gunther said these dates are optional for attendance, it is an open invite to those who can attend.

CORRESPONDENCE

Mayor Gunther addressed earlier in meeting under Mayor's Report.

ATTORNEY'S REPORT

1. Memorandum Boards and Commissions

City Attorney Vanerian explained the memo is self-explanatory and it is for reference purposes.

Mayor Gunther said he would like to nominate Mr. Giovanni Johnson to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

**CM 01-08-26 MOTION TO ACCEPT NOMINATION AND APPOINT
GIOVANNI JOHNSON TO THE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS**

Motion by O'Rourke, seconded by Schinzing, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To accept nomination and appoint Giovanni Johnson to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes (7) Woods, Ambrose, Arnold, Loch, O'Rourke, Schinzing, Gunther
Nays (0)
Absent (0)
Abstain (0)

Mayor Pro Tem O'Rourke explained when an applicant submitted their application they were asked to provide the notary fee. He asked for a waiver of this for those that submit a boards and commission application.

CM 01-09-26 MOTION TO WAIVE NOTARY FEE FOR BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS APPLICANTS

Motion by O'Rourke, seconded by Ambrose, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To waive notary fee for board and commissionS applicants.

Mayor Gunther said he would like to nominate Mr. Jorey Scrivens to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

CM 01-10-26 MOTION TO ACCEPT NOMINATION AND APPOINT JOREY SCRIVENS TO THE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Motion by O'Rourke, seconded by Arnold, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To accept nomination and appoint Jorey Scrivens to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes (7) Ambrose, Arnold, Loch, O'Rourke, Schinzing, Woods, Gunther
Nayes (0)
Absent (0)
Abstain (0)

Mayor Gunther said he would like to nominate Mr. Andrew Maltese to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

CM 01-11-26 MOTION TO ACCEPT NOMINATION AND APPOINT ANDREW MALTESE TO THE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Motion by O'Rourke, seconded by Woods, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To accept nomination and appoint Andrew Maltese to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes (7) Arnold, Loch, O'Rourke, Schinzing, Woods, Ambrose, Gunther
Nayes (0)
Absent (0)
Abstain (0)

Mayor Gunther said he would like to nominate Ms. Ruth Defresne to the Parks and Recreation Commission.

CM 01-12-26 MOTION TO ACCEPT NOMINATION AND APPOINT RUTH DEFRENSE TO THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Motion by O'Rourke, seconded by Woods: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To accept nomination and appoint Ruth Defrense to the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes (7) Loch, O'Rourke, Schinzing, Woods, Ambrose, Arnold, Gunther
Nays (0)
Absent (0)
Abstain (0)

Mayor Gunther said he would like to nominate Mr. Tom Langan to the Downtown Development Authority.

CM 01-13-26 MOTION TO ACCEPT NOMINATION AND APPOINT TOM LANGAN TO THE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Motion by O'Rourke, seconded by Arnold, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To accept nomination and appoint Tom Langan to the Downtown Development Authority.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes (7) O'Rourke, Schinzing, Woods, Ambrose, Arnold, Loch, Gunther
Nays (0)
Absent (0)
Abstain (0)

City Attorney Vanerian explained each board and commission member has a term, when a vacancy is filled, the new member fills that vacancy until expiration and then is reappointed for the next term.

2. Memorandum Ordinance Amendment to Planned Unit Development (PUD) and Commercial Planned Unit Development (CPD)

City Attorney Vanerian addressed Council regarding the 90-day moratorium previously adopted on Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) and associated fees. He explained that the purpose of the moratorium is to allow council to review the City's existing ordinances and consider potential amendments. City Attorney Vanerian provided an overview of Section 503 of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, which governs PUDs and outlines statutory requirements for PUD ordinances. He reviewed the city's current PUD regulations and presented recommendations and potential amendments for Council's consideration. He explained that the current ordinance allows significant discretion and emphasized that state law provides the city with substantial flexibility in determining how PUDs are regulated. City Attorney Vanerian explained one approach discussed was distinguishing between use-based zoning regulations and non-use zoning regulations. He explained that the city could allow limited flexibility for non-use standards, such as setbacks, building height, and dimensional requirements, while restricting or eliminating discretion related to permitted uses. Under the current ordinance, a PUD may allow uses that are not otherwise permitted in the underlying zoning district. City Attorney Vanerian explained that council could amend the ordinance to require that, in order to be eligible for a PUD, the proposed use must already be permitted under the property's existing zoning classification. If the use is not permitted, the property would not qualify for the PUD option.

City Attorney Vanerian further discussed an alternative approach used by some communities known as a Planned Rezoning Overlay (PRO), which combines rezoning and PUD approval into a single process. He explained that a benefit of this approach is that the city would know exactly what development is proposed at the time of rezoning, as opposed to traditional rezoning where future uses may vary. City Attorney Vanerian also discussed the potential role of the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) in the PUD process. He stated that Council could limit the scope of modifications permitted under a PUD and require applicants to seek variances from the ZBA for standards outside that scope. City Attorney Vanerian explained that council could establish quantifiable limits on allowable modifications within a PUD. For example, dimensional standards such as setbacks, height, or density could be modified only up to a defined cap, such as a 10 percent increase, rather than allowing unlimited deviations. He stated that setting measurable thresholds would further reduce discretionary decision-making while still allowing limited flexibility. City Attorney Vanerian said that council has several policy options available and emphasized that any combination of these approaches could be used to amend the current PUD ordinance in a manner consistent with state law.

Mayor Gunther said he has received emails and phone calls from a developer that came before the city. Mayor Gunther said he would like a motion to form a committee to begin the discussions on the ordinance amendments.

City Attorney Vanerian suggested reviewing design standards to begin.

CM 01-14-26 TO COORDINATE A COMMITTEE TO INCLUDE MEMBERS FROM THE DDA, PLANNING COMMISSION, AND CITY COUNCIL TO FACILITATE DISCUSSIONS FOR ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS TO THE PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD) AND COMMERCIAL PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (CPD) ORDINANCES

Motion by Arnold, seconded by O'Rourke, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To coordinate a committee to include members from the DDA, Planning Commission and City Council to facilitate discussions for ordinance amendments to the Planned Unit Development (PUD) and Commercial Planned Unit Development (CPD) ordinances.

Discussion

City Manager Whitt explained it is better to have committee meetings and can host those meetings in council chambers. City Manager Whitt cautioned that if a majority of council were to attend a committee meeting, it then becomes a public meeting and requires to meet the Open Meetings Act (OMA), a public notice in paper is required and audience participation. City Manager Whitt explained it may be better to have a smaller size committee. City Manager Whitt said he would like to have Council Member Schinzing as part of the committee with his experience from the Commerce Township Planning Commission, Council Member Arnold, Mayor Gunther, and City Attorney.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes (7) Schinzing, Woods, Ambrose, Arnold, Loch, O'Rourke, Gunther
Nayes (0)
Absent (0)
Abstain (0)

UNFINISHED BUSINESS**1. Proposed Resolution 2026-02 Schedule of Regular Meetings for 2026**

Mayor Gunther said he wants to have two city council meetings a month, the first and third Tuesday. He said there is a lot to accomplish and one meeting a month is not enough. He said if council does not agree, he will call a special meeting on the first Tuesday of every month.

City Manager Whitt said if there are four votes of council then it will be scheduled.

Mayor Pro Tem O'Rourke said city council placed a 90-day time limit on ordinance reviews and amendments. The timeline is already 30 days into the 90-day time limit.

Council Member Arnold explained at this time he is in support of two meetings for the next three months and then reevaluate then if two meetings a month are still necessary.

CM 01-15-26 MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 2026-02 THE 2026 CITY COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE AND TO INCORPORATE ADDITIONAL MEETING DATES FOR FEBRUARY, MARCH AND APRIL OF 2026 THAT INCLUDE THE FIRST TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH AND THEN REEVALUATE

Motion by Arnold, seconded by O'Rourke, MOTION CARRIED: To approve resolution 2026-02 the 2026 city council meeting schedule and to incorporate additional meeting dates for February, March and April of 2026 that include the first Tuesday of each month and then reevaluate.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes (4) Arnold, O'Rourke, Schinzing, Gunther
Nayes (3) Woods, Ambrose, Loch
Absent (0)
Abstain (0)

NEW BUSINESS None

COUNCIL COMMENTS None

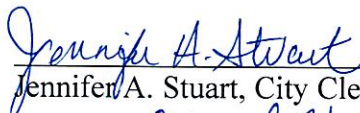
MAYOR'S COMMENTS

Mayor Gunther asked what the city needs to provide and do during a council meeting. Mayor Gunther asked if audience participation required for an Open Meeting.

City Attorney Vanerian explained when a quorum is present, audience participation is required to meet the requirements of the Open Meetings Act.

ADJOURNMENT**CM 01-16-26 ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Schinzing, seconded by Ambrose: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To adjourn the meeting at 10:06 P.M.


Jennifer A. Stuart, City Clerk
approved 2/17/26


Richard Gunther, Mayor