



**CITY OF WALLED LAKE
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, JULY 7, 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 Schinzing, and Council Member Woods

OTHERS PRESENT

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

** Attended via electronically.*

CM 07-01-26 MOTION TO EXCUSE COUNCIL MEMBER LOCH FROM TONIGHT'S MEETING

Motion by Ambrose, seconded by O'Rourke, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To excuse Council Member Loch from tonight's meeting.

Mayor Gunther asked City Attorney Vanerian how to address the meeting with Council Members Schinzing, Arnold and Woods attending electronically.

Those attending electronically said it was due to work, vacation and personal time off (PTO).

City Attorney Vanerian explained he is not sure those exceptions apply to all cases here tonight. City Attorney Vanerian explained there is not much on the agenda and due to the quantity of council members attending electronically he recommended council postpone voting on any business items to the next meeting.

Council Member Arnold explained he did not see the difference if gone for work or sick, he took time out to participate, sitting here in person or remotely to do so.

City Attorney Vanerian stated he will review and provide legal opinion to council, to have clarity on the exceptions permitted by the Open Meetings Act.

Mayor Gunther said the meeting will continue as discussion only.

REQUESTS FOR AGENDA CHANGE

Council Member Ambrose said he would like to add under New Business a resolution to acknowledge the volunteers, DDA, DPW, and city staff on the efforts for annual summer festival that went flawlessly.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Downtown Business Owner of Greenhouse of Walled Lake Mr. Jerry Millen said he wanted to personally thank everybody that worked on the summer festival because they did a great job. He said it was the best we have had so far. Mr. Millen said DPW and office staff do not receive enough recognition and thanked the DPW, office staff, police, fire and the Walled Lake Civic Fund for a great event. Mr. Millen thanked RJ from the Civic Fund stating this individual gives so much time and effort, it is not always easy to put this show on. He said in closing he hopes next year that the businesses that continue to suck off the charity of this event will participate. He said you know who they are and he hopes they step up like everybody else in the community.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

1. The Civic Fund / DDA / City of Walled Lake Fireworks and Festival Report

City Manager Whitt asked Mr. Ron (RJ) Johnston from the Civic Fund to provide a brief review.

Mr. Johnston, Walled Lake Civic Fund said he has been part of the Walled Lake Civic Fund for 16 years, and sits on the city's DDA board. Mr. Johnston said the volunteers always give their all to the firework show, but this year the Civic Fund for the first time created a summer festival in addition to the firework display. He said without the volunteers, naming a few that include Kathy Kramer, Bryan O'Leary, Alexis Hawkins, Marybeth Novitsky, and more sincere thank you. He said this is a group effort to make this happen. Mr. Johnston explained the cooperation from DPW, fire and police worked well and he appreciates everybody's help. He said DPW crew members kept the area clean. He reported that the number of wristbands were 6,000 plus, the bounce houses were a hit, music was great, and the Oakland County stage looked great on top of the hill. He explained there were people from all around Livingston and Wayne County as well as Oakland County. He said all the vendors did well and would like to discuss expanding the number of vendors next year. Mr. Johnston said the overall crowd composure was good. He said in the future, he would like to communicate with every business in Walled Lake prior to event, have a premeeting, give them the opportunity if they wish to participate. He said he will pursue DDA approvals earlier.

City Manager Whitt said this will be on the DDA agenda for next meeting for further conversations.

Mr. Johnston thanked the Greenhouse of Walled Lake and Casey's of Walled Lake for their significant efforts with this event. He thanked city council, City Manager Whitt, the DDA and city staff.

Mayor Pro Tem O'Rourke complimented the DPW on the clean-up, the crew was on top of the site, the SMART shuttle transportation was great. He said this event makes Walled Lake a finer community. Mr. Johnston is a great ambassador to the city.

City Manager Whitt asked for resolution to be read into the record.

City Clerk Stuart read in the record the following resolution.

*STATE OF MICHIGAN
COUNTY OF OAKLAND
CITY OF WALLED LAKE*

*A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WALLED LAKE
ACKNOWLEDGING AND THANKING THE VOLUNTEERS, SPONSORS, AND
COMMUNITY PARTNERS WHO CONTRIBUTED TO MAKING THE WALLED
LAKE CIVIC FUND SUMMER FESTIVAL AN OUTSTANDING 2026
COMMUNITY EVENT*

Proposed RESOLUTION 2026-XX

At a Regular Meeting of the City Council of the City of Walled Lake, Oakland County, Michigan, held in the Council Chambers at 1499 E. West Maple Road, Walled Lake, Michigan 48390 on the 7th day of July 2026 at 7:30 p.m.

WHEREAS, the Walled Lake Civic Fund Summer Festival brings together residents, businesses, community organizations, and visitors in celebration of the City of Walled Lake; and

WHEREAS, the success of the 2026 Walled Lake Civic Fund Summer Festival was made possible through the dedication, hard work, and countless volunteer hours contributed by individuals who generously gave their time, talents, and energy to planning, organizing, coordinating, and operating the festival include:

<i>Ron Johnston</i>	<i>Alexis Hawkins</i>	<i>Bryan O'Leary</i>
<i>Michael Whitney</i>	<i>Monica Johnson</i>	<i>Kathy Kramer</i>
<i>Marybeth Novitsky</i>	<i>Kevin Jonski</i>	<i>Adam Bell</i>
<i>Macie Smith</i>	<i>Alex Hagood</i>	

WHEREAS, the City also recognizes the invaluable support of the festival's major sponsors, whose generous financial contributions, in-kind donations, and partnership helped provide quality entertainment, family activities, and community programming while ensuring the continued success of this signature event include:

Walled Lake DDA Greenhouse Walled Lake

*Casey's of Walled Lake Suburban Party Rentals
SMART Shuttle Oakland County Parks*

WHEREAS, the combined efforts of the Walled Lake Civic Fund Board of Directors, committee members, volunteers, sponsors, local businesses, community organizations, public safety personnel, City staff, and other community partners exemplify the spirit of volunteerism, civic pride, and collaboration that makes the City of Walled Lake a vibrant and welcoming community; and

WHEREAS, the City Council recognizes that volunteerism is the foundation of many successful community events and greatly appreciates the efforts of all those who helped make the 2026 Walled Lake Civic Fund Summer Festival a memorable and outstanding event.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City of Walled Lake hereby expresses its sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Walled Lake Civic Fund, its Board of Directors, committee members, event coordinators, sponsors, and the many dedicated volunteers whose commitment and service contributed to the tremendous success of the 2026 Walled Lake Civic Fund Festival.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Council extends its heartfelt thanks for the volunteers' dedication to fostering community pride, strengthening neighborhood connections, and creating an enjoyable and welcoming experience for residents and visitors alike.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this Resolution be presented as a token of the City's appreciation for the outstanding service and commitment demonstrated by all who

Motion to approve Resolution was offered by _____ and seconded by _____.

**CM 07-02-26 MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 2026-18 A RESOLUTION
OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WALLED LAKE
ACKNOWLEDGING AND THANKING THE VOLUNTEERS,
SPONSORS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS WHO
CONTRIBUTED TO MAKING THE WALLED LAKE CIVIC
FUND SUMMER FESTIVAL AN OUTSTANDING 2026
COMMUNITY EVENT**

Motion by O'Rourke, seconded by Ambrose, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To approve resolution 2026-18 a resolution of the City Council of the City of Walled Lake acknowledging and thanking the volunteers, sponsors and community partners who contributed to making the Walled Lake Civic Fund Summer Festival an outstanding 2026 community event.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Resolution 2026-19 Purchase of a New 2026 Ford E-450 Ambulance

Council Member Schinzing explained he sent Fire Chief Gonzalez a note about what his expectations were and he did not meet those expectations. Council Member Schinzing said to be clearer or maybe there's an opportunity for dialogue, but the remount is not what he is talking about. He said he is specifically talking about more information to make the best decision for the city. Council Member Schinzing said he is requesting an analysis of a repower. He said he spoke with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, EMS director of vehicle registration and he did not believe there's an issue with repowering, putting a new engine, new transmission in a vehicle. Council Member Schinzing said he wants an analysis of that option as well as an analysis of leasing a vehicle. He said this is a very big purchase; it is 5% of our budget. It is a big, big purchase for our city and in any big purchase in any corporation, there's a lot more analysis done and checking done with a purchase like this. He would like to see more information, and he can provide Chief Gonzalez with Derek's contact information. But he is definitely looking for a couple more options than what was offered by Chief Gonzalez.

Fire Chief Gonzalez explained that he spoke with the State's EMS Division and confirmed the requirements with the assigned state inspector. He stated that while the City can purchase a used ambulance, any major modification, such as replacing the engine, creates certification issues. Although the ambulance could potentially remain in service, once a new engine is installed it would need to be recertified by an authorized vendor. He explained that if the replacement engine is installed by a vendor that is not authorized by the vehicle manufacturer, the ambulance cannot be properly certified. As a result, the vehicle could lose its grandfathered certification status, which would present liability and insurance concerns, particularly if it were involved in a motor vehicle accident. He stated that the City's insurance carrier, MMRMA, could have concerns under those circumstances.

Council Member Schinzing said he would like to take the current ambulance and repower it.

Fire Chief Gonzalez explained that the City's ambulance has the equivalent of more than 200,000 miles and approximately 7,200 engine hours. While replacing the engine is technically possible, doing so would invalidate the vehicle's original Ford and Triple K certification. Although the City currently owns the ambulance and it is grandfathered under its existing certification, replacing the engine without a certified remount process would result in the vehicle no longer meeting certification standards. He explained that the lack of certification could create significant liability concerns in the event of an accident, insurance providers and attorneys would review the vehicle's maintenance records and certification history. Fire Chief Gonzalez explained that the ambulance's issues extend beyond the engine. In addition to the powertrain, the electrical system, oxygen system, suspension, and front-end components are also aging and would require replacement. He stated that fire departments typically do not replace only the engine. Instead, they utilize a certified remount process, the existing ambulance box is transferred to a new chassis by an authorized manufacturer. During the remount, the box is completely refurbished and rewired, resulting in what is essentially a new ambulance with a new title and certification. He explained that the Michigan Department of Health has a specific application process for remounted ambulances and that several neighboring departments, including White Lake Township, Milford, Waterford, Brighton, and West Bloomfield, have successfully utilized

remounted ambulances. He advised that replacing the engine would also create operational challenges because the city currently has only one ambulance. This one ambulance responded to approximately 80 incidents and transported 28 patients during the previous month. Taking this vehicle out of service for an extended engine replacement would leave the department without an ambulance. He noted that during the past three years, the ambulance has been out of service for a combined total of approximately six months, requiring the city to borrow an ambulance from the City of Wixom.

Fire Chief Gonzalez reported that obtaining a certified remount for the City's existing ambulance would cost approximately \$200,000 and require a 9 to 12-month production timeline. Fire Chief Gonzalez recommended purchasing a completed 2026 Ford E-450 gas-powered remounted ambulance with a larger patient compartment for approximately \$197,000. Additional costs for the patient cot, power load system, graphics, and other required equipment would bring the total project cost to approximately \$277,000. Under this plan, the City's current ambulance would become a reserve unit, with the intention of completing a certified remount of that vehicle within the next three to five years. This would provide the department with two dependable ambulances that could be rotated to maintain uninterrupted service. Fire Chief Gonzalez emphasized that Walled Lake is the only basic life support transport agency in the surrounding area operating with a single ambulance. He said neighboring departments, including the Village of Holly, Wixom, and Milford, each operate multiple ambulances. He said Walled Lake transports approximately 80 percent of the City's medical patients, maintaining reliable ambulance service is critical. He said the department does partner with Superior EMS, but private ambulance availability has continued to decline, and other regional providers, including Huron Valley Ambulance, are often unavailable due to increased demand. Fire Chief Gonzalez explained these staffing and availability challenges have led communities such as Commerce Township, White Lake Township, and Highland Township to assume primary responsibility for their own EMS transport services rather than relying on private ambulance providers. Fire Chief Gonzalez said that after approximately four months of research, he believes purchasing the remounted 2026 E-450 ambulance represents the most cost-effective solution. He said that replacing the department's current F-450 diesel ambulance with a comparable new model would cost approximately \$450,000. By selecting the E-450 gas-powered model, the department would obtain a vehicle that meets its operational needs at a substantially lower cost while still providing adequate space for patient care and required firefighting equipment.

Mayor Gunther asked why not lease.

Fire Chief Gonzalez explained that approximately 25 years ago the city leased Ladder 19, a demonstration truck originally valued at approximately \$586,000. The lease payments were approximately \$77,000 annually for 10 years, resulting in a total cost of about \$770,000 before the city took ownership. He explained that leasing ultimately increased the overall cost of the vehicle. He stated that the proposed ambulance lease would similarly increase the total purchase price. Under the available financing options, a three-year lease would increase the cost by approximately \$45,000, while a four-year lease would result in an even higher total cost. He further explained that the lease payments would not begin until the vehicle was delivered, which is expected to take approximately one year. Fire Chief Gonzalez compared the proposed remounted ambulance, which is available immediately, with purchasing a newly built

ambulance. He noted that a new ambulance would cost approximately \$62,000 more than the remounted unit currently available. While he acknowledged that leasing may be appropriate for significantly more expensive apparatus, such as fire engines or ladder trucks costing approximately \$1 million, he did not believe leasing was the most fiscally responsible option for an ambulance costing less than \$300,000. Fire Chief Gonzalez emphasized that the City's ambulance transport program generates sufficient revenue to offset the cost of the E-450 vehicle. Fire Chief Gonzalez said ambulance transports have generated approximately \$682,000 in net revenue to the City's General Fund. He explained, based on the department's increased call volume, he projected an additional approximately \$292,000 in net revenue over the next three years, stating that the ambulance effectively pays for itself through transport revenue.

City Manager Whitt stated that he supports Fire Chief Gonzalez's request and recommendation. He said that the Chief brings more than 25 years of fire service experience and is a highly educated and respected manager. City Manager Whitt explained that he has spent several months working closely with the Chief, including multiple meetings to review the ambulance needs and available options. He stated that the Chief conducted extensive research, documented his findings, and presented a well-supported recommendation. City Manager Whitt agreed that ambulance transport is an essential municipal service provided by the city and recommended that Council approve the proposed purchase.

Council Member Schinzing opined he is not challenging anybody's credentials. He said he is asking for a more in-depth analysis of leasing options and repower.

Council Member Woods asked Council Member Schinzing for his last vehicle purchase, did he purchase a remount.

Council Member Schinzing explained to be fiscally responsible, he was expecting a deeper analysis provided.

Mayor Pro Tem O'Rourke asked City Manager Whitt with his municipal history in different communities working with police and fire, what is his opinion of leasing.

City Manager Whitt explained that financing or leasing the ambulance would create unnecessary long-term debt when the City has sufficient funds available to purchase it outright. He stated that leasing is comparable to bonding in that it requires borrowing money and ultimately results in paying more than the purchase price. He explained that the City currently has no outstanding debt, having previously paid off its bonded obligations, and explained the funds set aside were intended for capital purchases such as this. City Manager Whitt explained that financing the purchase would obligate future City Councils to continue making payments, effectively limiting their financial flexibility.

Mayor Pro Tem O'Rourke confirmed it is not fiscally responsible to lease with incurred costs.

Mayor Gunther said there were things he wanted to finalize in the budget and said we can change the budget later and that is why we said it is the budget and he understands the budget. Mayor Gunther said he is half the city manager's age, but his experience is you lease things that depreciate and you purchase what appreciates. Mayor Gunther wants to understand what the

fiscal differences and math behind it. Mayor Gunther said you don't hold the next council responsible because you can always opt out.

City Manager Whitt said you are mortgaging your future any time you lease. City Manager Whitt stated why would you lease it if you can pay for an ambulance because you end up paying extra via lease. City Manager Whitt said he will take a lease if the council votes to get the ambulance.

Mayor Gunther said he isn't going to make a decision, he wants to know what the finances look like on paper and if we cannot do that, then that is what we will do.

Council Member Schinzing asked if the other components to be purchased can be removed from the old truck and placed on the new truck.

Fire Chief Gonzalez explained that the existing ambulance must retain its patient cot and power-load system so it can remain in service as the City's reserve ambulance. He stated that removing those components would render the vehicle inoperable as an ambulance, eliminating the City's only backup unit. He explained that the equipment currently installed in the existing ambulance is also aging and will require future maintenance and refurbishment. Fire Chief Gonzalez stressed the importance of maintaining a backup ambulance, explaining that the Fire Department operates two fire engines to ensure uninterrupted emergency response and should have the same level of redundancy for ambulance service. He stated that during the department's 18 years of providing ambulance transport, there have been multiple occasions when the city had no ambulance available because its only unit was out of service. As the City's primary ambulance provider, he said maintaining two ambulances is essential to ensure continuous emergency medical service.

Council Member Schinzing said he expects to receive the cost to refurbish components to place in the remount.

Fire Chief Gonzalez confirmed that Councilman Shinzing wants to take the cot and power unit out of the existing ambulance to put in the new ambulance and then the city will not have a spare ambulance.

Council Member Shinzing said correct. He said he understands that is not what Chief Gonzalez wants to do but that is what he wants to know to make his determination.

Mayor Gunther said we have two more weeks to make a decision. Mayor Gunther said the fire chief is taking it the wrong way. He said he understands where Council Member Schinzing is coming from and the peanut gallery does not need to throw comments out either. Mayor Gunther explained it is important to look at it from a structural perspective. Mayor Gunther said are we ever, would it be better if we leased and paid it, create a revenue. Mayor Gunther said he does not know he has not seen a fiscal analysis. Mayor Gunther said his lifetime understanding and mathematics behind it, he leases because he does not want to own it and does not want to have the capital.

Council Member Shinzing said it sounds like we are going to have to lease into a bond for infrastructure of the city. Council Member Shinzing said at some point we are going to have to borrow money or lease something, so he wants this information to make a decision for the city. Council Member Ambrose responded to Mayor Gunther's use of the term "peanut gallery," stating that the individuals present were not a peanut gallery, but members of the City's Fire Department. He expressed concern regarding the comment and noted that those in attendance represented the department and its personnel.

Mayor Gunther stated he has not allowed Mr. Ambrose to speak yet.

Council Member Ambrose asked the mayor if he can speak and stated again that the fire department is not a peanut gallery.

Mayor Gunther said he did not say peanut gallery to those in the audience but meant Council Member Ambrose.

Council Member Ambrose clarified for supporting our fire department.

Mayor Gunther said no, for comments. Mayor Gunther said we have to get to point people where you guys want to speak, have someone else be made aware then they can be allowed to speak and they can speak back but we are jumping on each other, and he is not liking it.

Council Member Schinzing said he is supportive of the fire department, he expected more information, and he feels like he is being stonewalled. He said he had never been in a business meeting where they were making a decision this big without questions being asked and without more information.

City Manager Whitt addressed the discussion and stated that no one was attempting to stonewall the process. He stated that Council members have the authority to vote based on the information presented and that the matter could be brought back for consideration at a future meeting if needed. City Manager Whitt said decisions are not made based on the position of one Council Member, the Mayor, or the City Manager, but rather through the collective action of the elected legislative body. He stated that the City's need for an ambulance would be addressed, the method of acquisition, either purchase or lease, remained a decision for Council. He reiterated his position that leasing would not be his recommended option based on his experience and understanding of municipal financing. City Manager Whitt said this item will return for future discussion focused on resolving the issue rather than assigning blame or suggesting that anyone was intentionally delaying the process.

Council Member Woods stated that maintaining ambulance availability is a priority for the City and its residents. He referenced recent instances when the City's ambulance was out of service, including a period when it was unavailable for much of the month. He emphasized the importance of having reliable emergency medical responses available to residents. Council Member Woods referenced comments from a resident, Terry Daar, who shared that having the Fire Department and ambulance service available at his home was instrumental in saving his wife's life. Council Member Woods acknowledged that Fire Chief Gonzalez provided extensive

information. He said maintaining the City's ISO fire rating is an important consideration, as the rating can impact residents' homeowners' insurance costs. He stated that the city must ensure it has reliable operational equipment and adequate emergency response capabilities to protect the City's ISO rating and continue providing quality service to residents.

Council Member Arnold said he agreed with Council Member Shinzing saying that it is probable that they will move forward. Council Member Arnold said he is looking for additional information to move forward because there is an aspect to this and wants the analysis. Council Member Arnold said he knows there is man hours and does not know the time to do such an analysis but having the information does not hurt and allows him a holistic view of the budget. Council Member Arnold said it makes sense to move forward in the proposed way the Chief proposed however, additional information could be beneficial.

Mayor Gunther said he would like to understand as an organization because some city's lease. Mayor Gunther said it's okay to lease if you pay more overtime and level out your expenditures. Mayor Gunther said the Fire Chief and Council Member Shinzing to get a conversation.

City Manager Whitt said this is not between the Chief and Council Member Schinzing, we are not going to have a one on one, we will meet together at city hall.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Schinzing asked about depreciation of major assets and corresponding accrual schedule. He asked about FTE allocation percentages in the budget information. He asked for the status of the code of conduct.

City Attorney Vanerian explained that he previously presented the proposed ordinance as a draft at the last meeting for Council's review and consideration. He stated the intent of the draft was to allow Council Members the opportunity to provide comments, suggest revisions, or identify any additions or deletions they would like incorporated before preparing a final draft for first reading. No one responded to him. City Attorney Vanerian said if Council was generally satisfied with the draft as presented, he could finalize the document and place it on an upcoming agenda for first reading.

Council Member Arnold shared that he recently met with a local business owner regarding the recently acquired DDA property, indicating that discussions are underway and that he hopes to see something come of his discussions.

Council Member Ambrose reiterated one more time Ron Johnston, Walled Lake Civic Fund, the businesses who chose to participate gave their hard-earned time and money. There is not a thank large enough for this.

Mayor Pro Tem O'Rourke said we had our first concert at Casey Ambrose Public Safety Campus and it was a great turnout and amazing concert. He said there will be a reading of the Declaration of Independence at 6 pm at the Walled Lake Cemetery tomorrow, July 8th. He explained that similar events are taking place in communities across the country and thanked the Historical

Society for organizing the event. He said later that evening at Hiram Sims Park the summer concert series was featuring Detroit Social Club beginning at 7:30 p.m. Mayor Pro Tem O'Rourke thanked DPW Supervisor Dan Ladd and his team for their continued efforts in preparing and supporting community events and encouraged residents to participate in the evening's activities.

Council Member Woods expressed appreciation for the City's team for their work on the fireworks and community festivities. He noted that several items he intended to discuss had already been addressed and commended staff for their efforts.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION None

ADJOURNMENT

CM 07-03-26 ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Ambrose, seconded by O'Rourke, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To adjourn the meeting at 8:39 P.M.

Jennifer A. Stuart, City Clerk

Richard Gunther, Mayor

History: Chapter 6, The Council: Procedure and Miscellaneous Powers and Duties: *Section 6.7 (a) A journal of the proceedings of each meeting shall be kept in the English language by the Clerk and shall be signed by the presiding officer and Clerk of the meeting.*