

**THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE FORTY-FIRST COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BERKLEY, MICHIGAN
WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 7:00 PM ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2026 BY MAYOR DEAN**

PRESENT: Councilmember Steve Baker
Councilmember Gary Elrod
Mayor Pro Tem Ross Gavin
Councilmember Dennis Hennen
Councilmember Gregory Patterson
Mayor Bridget Dean

ABSENT: Councilmember Clarence Black

OTHER STAFF PRESENT:

City Manager Crystal VanVleck
City Attorney Lisa Hamameh
City Clerk Victoria Mitchell
Community Development Director Kristen Kapelanski
Communications Director Caitlin Flora
Public Safety Lt. Corey Miller

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Pro Tem Gavin moved to approve the agenda
Seconded by Councilmember Patterson
Ayes: Elrod, Gavin, Hennen, Patterson, Baker and Dean
Nays: None
Absent: Black
Motion Approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jason Storms, Berkley, spoke regarding the continued attention toward the city attorney's oath of office and what he believes are unnecessary city resources toward the issue.

CONSENT AGENDA

Councilmember Hennen moved to approve the following Consent Agenda
Seconded by Councilmember Baker

M-13-26: Minutes of the 41st Regular City Council meeting on Monday, February 2, 2026.

R-01-26: Consideration of the Mayor and City Manager entering into an Oakland County P25 Simulcast System Interlocal Agreement Between Oakland County and the City of Berkley.

M-14-26: Warrant List No. 1419.

Ayes: Elrod, Gavin, Hennen, Patterson, Baker and Dean
Nays: None
Absent: Black
Motion Approved.

Regular Agenda

RECOGNITIONS/PRESENTATIONS: Matter of receiving any recognitions or presentations from the Consent Agenda.

None.

Update from 44th District Court Judge Andrew Kowalkowski.

Judge Kowalkowski and Judge Meineke provided an update:

- Judge Kowalkowski started with Operation Drive. Operation Drive is the court's signature program. Approximately 1,900 licenses have been restored through the program since 2016.
 - The program has expanded. Nine additional courts across Michigan implemented Operation Drive after receiving grant funding.
 - A manual was created by the Supreme Court Administrator with input from the court to make the program easy to implement statewide.
 - In Royal Oak, participants who complete the program may have a misdemeanor reduced to a civil infraction ("public nuisance").
 - The program is designed to help individuals whose licenses were suspended due to financial or administrative barriers. It is not a shortcut for unsafe drivers. The prosecutor in Berkley has been exploring options to mirror this reduction.
- The 44th District Court operates the third-largest district court treatment program in Michigan, behind Detroit and Grand Rapids, and is currently just three participants behind Detroit.
 - The program serves individuals with multiple DUI offenses and substance use challenges. Participants progress through four phases and are on intensive probation.
 - There is a large team of volunteers and court staff who support the program. Active participants number around 50 per judge.
 - Recent graduations have been particularly meaningful, including one where the participant's mother, who had supported him through reviews and transportation, had passed away shortly before graduation.
- Every 5th-grade student in Royal Oak and Berkley public schools participates in the two-day Justice 101 program.
 - The first day is in the classroom explaining the court system; the second day is a courthouse visit. Students are assigned at least one legal vocabulary word to memorize. Berkley students often memorize additional words.
 - Upcoming dates:
 - March 9 and 11 – Rogers
 - April 27 and 29 – Pattengill
 - May 4 and 6 – Pattengill
 - May 13 – Angell (makeup for snow day)
 - Councilmembers are welcome to attend. Students also visit the Royal Oak Police Department during the program.
- Teen Court continues at Norup and Royal Oak Middle Schools for grades six through eight.
 - Students act as prosecutors, defense attorneys, and jurors in cases involving Oakland County youth who have admitted responsibility for offenses such as retail fraud, trespassing, or malicious destruction of property.
 - Students participate in sentencing hearings and determine appropriate sanctions from a menu of options.
- A 2024 Supreme Court statewide survey found the 44th District Court performs the equivalent of 2.8 judgeships with only two judges.
 - At the time of the Royal Oak and Berkley merger, Royal Oak was 1.4 and Berkley 0.4, for a combined 1.8 judgeships.
 - The increase reflects the court's intensive programs rather than a rise in crime.
- A memorial wall honoring Judge Jamie Whittenberg will be installed at the courthouse.
 - The Royal Oak Historical Society led fundraising, with full funding now secured.
 - Dedication ceremony: May 27 at 5:00 PM, Royal Oak City Hall Commission Chambers, followed by the unveiling at the courthouse.
 - Additional funds are being considered for a scholarship for Royal Oak and Berkley High School students interested in law, history, political science, or civic engagement.

Update from 19th District Oakland County Commissioner Charlie Cavell.

- He said working with state partners on Operation Drive was cool because they go beyond what's required; they care and serve as role models rooted in the community.
- He stated that Berkley's TIF (Tax Increment Financing) policy recently changed due to Oakland County updating its rules.
 - He explained that Berkley DDA now must go through more meetings to access portions of the tax capture. The changes focus on affordable housing, sustainability, and ensuring prevailing wages are paid.
 - He stated TIF allows city taxes to be captured by the DDA to fund downtown projects such as flower pots, public improvements, and events. He explained that Oakland County approves tax captures because some county taxes are involved, giving the county oversight. Communities now have a menu where they can get up to 50% of tax capture instead of 100%, contingent on meeting standards in housing, sustainability, and prevailing wages.
 - He stated that Berkley has 15 years left on the existing TIF and does not need to reapply until paperwork is due. The county's portion reduction is roughly a 7–10% cut, not insignificant, but manageable.
 - He explained the policy was designed as a reward for communities engaging in sustainable and socially beneficial projects, rather than imposing mandatory reductions.
- He said Berkley was the first community to implement Oakland County's water affordability program, helping prevent basement flooding and backflow issues.
 - The program assists seniors and low-income residents and is renewed annually.
 - He explained that it helps install low-cost backflow valves and mitigates flooding effectively. Residents can contact him or the county for participation and guidance.
- He stated that ethics and immigration issues are a significant focus at the county level.
 - He said almost 1,500 people are housed in the Baldwin Detention Center, many picked up in Wayne and Oakland Counties. Federal ICE rules now allow agents to act outside predefined locations, increasing activity.
 - He said communities can prepare by:
 - Training police and public-facing staff on immigration law and city policy.
 - Deciding whether to enter a 287(g) agreement to deputize local officers to assist ICE.
 - Designating city property as ICE-free zones where federal agents cannot enter without judicial warrants.
 - Managing information sharing with ICE via the Clemus system, including requesting contract cancellation if desired.
 - The goal is to improve local safety and preparedness for residents impacted by immigration enforcement.

Marathon Health MiLife Consortium Presentation.

City Manager Van Vleck introduced the item. She stated that there are benefits to the employer and the employee. She said it is an interesting model. She said she believes in this.

Mark Manquen, Manquen Vance spoke regarding the program:

- Introduced a healthcare solution to three cities 10 years ago; the model has evolved and improved.
- Goal: Provide employees with healthcare options beyond cost-shifting via PA 152.
- PA 152 helped cities manage budgets but increased deductibles and co-pays for employees.

- Problem: Employees avoid care due to costs; self-funded plans alone don't improve employee health.
- Solution: On-site or nearby primary care centers to improve access and reduce urgent care visits.
- Benefits:
 - 30–40 minute primary care visits (longer than traditional appointments).
 - No co-pays for consultations, labs, or generic drugs.
 - Convenience and better patient experience.
- Post-COVID: Access to care is more challenging; this model is gaining popularity in southeast Michigan.
- Potential future expansion: Oakland County collaboration to create a mini-network of healthcare centers.
- Long-term impact: Improves employee health outcomes and reduces long-term claims.

Brian Uhrinek, Marathon Health presented:

- Emphasized the progressive approach: employee retention, satisfaction, and family health.
- The program addresses common frustrations with traditional healthcare (ineffective visits, fragmented care).
- Delivers a holistic, family-practice model integrating employees into a supportive community to deliver better health outcomes.
- The payment model is capitated (fixed fee for unlimited access) rather than fee-for-service (avoids “death by a thousand cuts”). Unlimited visits, unlimited access to those providers. The capitation fee is assessed on an annual basis.
- This model breaks away from what is available traditionally, where it's six or seven minutes of care. Time spent with providers is about 26 minutes on average.
- Focus is on the quality of care and the relationship with providers for better outcomes.
- Provider panels are intentionally smaller than the average community provider panel. That allows providers to spend more time with each patient, build that relationship, and really understand the employee's health history in depth. You're not just a number in a schedule. You have access to a provider who knows you, knows your history, and is actively working to keep you healthy.
- Labs, diagnostics, and imaging are coordinated in-house or through trusted partners. Instead of employees having to schedule separate appointments at different locations, they get a lot of that done under one roof. That also improves compliance and reduces overall costs down the road.
- Stated that they provide a dedicated care team. It's not just the provider. There's a care coordinator, behavioral health specialist, and sometimes a dietitian or health coach, depending on your population's needs. They proactively reach out to employees for follow-ups, preventive screenings, and chronic condition management.
- Employees can schedule visits through an app or by phone. They can even schedule same-day visits if needed. No long waits. The goal is to make healthcare convenient so employees are actually willing to go. This model has been proven to increase utilization of preventative care while decreasing expensive ER visits.
- Stated that because they are capitated and focused on prevention, the cost trend is predictable and stable. No surprise spikes in claims. They provide a clear budget for the city each year. And most importantly, employees get unlimited access without co-pays, which is a huge morale boost and encourages them to actually use the care when they need it.

Brian Uhrinek answered questions from Council:

- In similar-sized cities, they've seen a reduction in ER visits by about 20–25% in the first year. Hospital admissions for preventable conditions drop by roughly 15%. Over time, overall healthcare spend grows at a much lower rate than typical self-funded plans. And most importantly, employee satisfaction with healthcare options jumps significantly, which helps with retention and recruitment.

- Family members can be included. He stated that they recommend including spouses and dependents because it's much more effective to manage the whole family's health. Chronic conditions often affect multiple family members, and having one integrated care plan improves outcomes for everyone.
- All patient data is protected under HIPAA. The city does not see individual health information; only aggregate reporting to track trends and costs is received, never personal details. Employees can feel secure knowing their private health information is fully confidential.
- Behavioral health is integrated. They provide counseling, therapy, and support for anxiety, depression, stress, and other behavioral conditions. Employees can access these services directly at the clinic or virtually, depending on their needs.
- Typically, they can have a site up and running within 60–90 days. That includes staffing, scheduling, EMR setup, and employee enrollment. We work closely with your HR team to ensure a smooth rollout.

Resolution to add Berkley Entertainment LLC dba The Berkley Theater located at 2960 Twelve Mile Road to the Berkley Outdoor Social Scene (BOSS) Social District.

Councilmember Patterson moved to approve Resolution No. R-02-26

Seconded by Councilmember Elrod

Ayes: Gavin, Hennen, Patterson, Baker, Elrod, and Dean

Nays: None

Absent: Black

Motion Approved.

An ordinance of the City Council of the City of Berkley, Michigan to amend Section 7 4-1 through Section 7 4-12 of Chapter 7 4, Noise, of the Berkley City Code to allow for the regulation of sound and sound emitting devices by providing specific definitions and measurable decibel and sound pressure levels, and to remove and modify redundant language and provisions.

Mayor Pro Tem Gavin moved to approve Ordinance No. O-1-26

Seconded by Councilmember Patterson

Ayes: Hennen, Patterson, Baker, Elrod, Gavin and Dean

Nays: None

Absent: Black

Motion Approved.

An ordinance of the City Council of the City of Berkley, Michigan, to amend Chapter 82, Article XI, Municipal Civil Infractions, of the Berkley City Code to add a municipal civil infraction violations bureau and to further define and clarify the provisions in this Article.

Councilmember Hennen moved to approve Ordinance No. O-2-26

Seconded by Councilmember Baker

Ayes: Patterson, Baker, Elrod, Gavin, Hennen and Dean

Nays: None

Absent: Black

Motion Approved.

An ordinance of the City Council of the City of Berkley, Michigan to amend Chapter 26, Article VII, Residential Grading and Drainage Standards, Section 26-336(c) to amend as built drawing procedures for new single family residential construction.

Councilmember Hennen moved to approve Ordinance No. O-3-26

Seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Gavin

Ayes: Baker, Elrod, Gavin, Hennen, Patterson and Dean

Nays: None

Absent: Black

Motion Approved.

An ordinance of the City Council of the City of Berkley, Michigan, to amend Section 130-79 of Chapter 130, Article 111, Noxious Weeds, of the Berkley City Code.

Councilmember Patterson moved to approve Ordinance No. O-04-26

Seconded by Councilmember Hennen

Ayes: Elrod, Gavin, Hennen, Patterson, Baker and Dean

Nays: None

Absent: Black

Motion Approved.

An ordinance of the City Council of the City of Berkley, Michigan, to amend Chapter 38, Article III, Snow Emergencies, Section 38-33 of the City of Berkley Code of Ordinances to amend locations where parking is prohibited during a snow emergency.

Councilmember Elrod moved to approve Ordinance No. O-05-26

Seconded by Councilmember Baker

Ayes: Elrod, Gavin, Hennen, Patterson, Baker and Dean

Nays: None

Absent: Black

Motion Approved.

Updates to the fee schedule.

Councilmember Gavin moved to approve Motion No. M-15-26

Seconded by Councilmember Hennen

Ayes: Gavin, Hennen, Patterson, Baker, Elrod and Dean

Nays: None

Absent: Black

Motion Approved.

COMMUNICATIONS:

COUNCILMEMBER HENNEN

- The Tree Board met tonight, report to come next meeting.
- The Planning Commission will next meet on Tuesday, February 24th at 7 PM here at City Hall.
 - They have a number of housekeeping items, including minor corrections to the zoning map that need to be brushed up. They'll be considering amendments for data centers and looking at their bylaws and rules of procedure.

COUNCILMEMBER BAKER

- The Berkley Historical Committee met on February 10th.
 - One of the things they're rolling out is updated branding and brochures. To learn more information about our city's history and help to prepare for the future, they are available here at City Hall, at the Museum, and in the Library. They're free. Please take advantage of these and give one to your friends.
 - For more information, visit berkleyhistory.com.
- The Downtown Development Authority board met on February 11th.
 - One of the things they talked about was a presentation from the Berkley Days Committee, as they're beginning to ramp up work ahead of the 100th anniversary coming up in September.
 - There's some conversation with Better City consultants to help with the economic development strategy. The DDA had a great work session, and there were some follow-up interviews with other folks to gain additional insights to help feed into the material that will become the revised document in the next few months.
 - For more information on upcoming events, please visit downtownberkley.com.
- It was Theodore von Karman who said, "Scientists study the world as it is. Engineers create the world that has never been." The Berkley Robotics program empowers students to design, build,

and compete in high-level robotics competitions while developing teamwork, engineering, and problem-solving skills. Coming soon, they will have a community open house celebrating the team's new space in the former Cana Church building on Catalpa. They moved in late 2025, joining two other district programs in this amazing new space. All are welcome. Families, students, and community members are invited to tour the space, meet the team, and see innovation in action. It's fantastic stuff.

- Be careful, stay safe out there, and please hug somebody you love.

MAYOR PRO TEM GAVIN

- The next meeting of the Berkley Chamber of Commerce is March 17th at 5:30 PM at the Library.
- The next meeting of the Library Board will be on March 18th at 7 PM at the Library.
 - Speaking of the Library, they've got a Bulgaria and Balkan Wanderings travel program tomorrow at 6:30 PM.

COUNCILMEMBER PATTERSON

- Winterfest, which was rescheduled by our Parks and Recreation department due to the weather, is rescheduled for this Saturday from 12 to 2 PM. We hope to see everyone there.

COUNCILMEMBER ELROD

- The Beautification Advisory Committee will have its first meeting of the year this Wednesday at 6:30 PM in the second-floor conference room in the Public Safety building.
- The Environmental Advisory Committee met this past Tuesday. They laid out their draft plan for the events for the year. You'll hear more about that as those dates get closer; that's going to be public engagement and some things that the group will be doing on their own for self-education.
 - The next meeting is Tuesday, March 17th at 6:30 PM in the second-floor conference room in the Public Safety building.

CITY MANAGER VANVLECK

- No updates.

CITY ATTORNEY HAMAMEH

- No updates.

MAYOR DEAN

- Congratulated Sergeant Schewe on his promotion to Lieutenant and Public Safety Officer Childrey on his promotion to Sergeant. She said that she is very grateful for their service here in Berkley.
- Wished a happy second birthday to Jules Pet Cuisine. For those who don't know, it's the former popcorn shop. Jules does a great job there, making her dog treats on site. It's all freeze-dried things; very healthy. She's got a passion for not only pets, but also for her business.
- Congratulations to the Chamber on another successful Level Up event at 24 Seconds on a Wednesday night. It was very well attended and had a lot of good energy.
- Stated that she attended the first fish fry of the season on Friday night at the Legion, and they were jam-packed, and good for them. The fish was great, and she loves that the Legion involves other service groups; she said that they had the scouts there, and sometimes it's a baseball team, but it truly is a community effort.
- Her next Meet Your Mayor event is at Casa Amado this Wednesday, February 25th from 5 to 7 PM, and she hopes to see you there.

ADJOURNMENT:

Councilmember Patterson moved to adjourn the Regular Meeting at 9:17 PM

Seconded by Councilmember Hennen

Ayes: Patterson, Baker, Elrod, Gavin, Hennen and Dean

Nays: None

Absent: Black

Motion Approved.

Bridget Dean, Mayor

ATTEST:

Victoria Mitchell, City Clerk