



City Manager Report

February 10, 2025

Progress, Goals and Priorities

- City Council recently held their Strategic Planning meeting at the Saugatuck Yacht Club.
- Part of the meeting involved a progress report on this fiscal year's priorities. The presentation materials can be viewed here: [Summary of Progress Reports](#)
- The facilitator's full report from the strategic planning session can be viewed here: [Facilitator's Report](#)
- Council reviewed the reports, goals, and priorities at their February 5 workshop. A vote is expected at the February 10 regular meeting.

Lead Testing Report

- The Kalamazoo Lake Sewer Water Authority provided the following, showing 0 sites were above action levels for lead or copper:

The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) received your results of lead and copper tap monitoring conducted between June 1 and September 30, 2024. The calculated 90th percentile values are listed below. Please retain this information for your records.

Action Levels	90 th Percentile Value	# of Sites Above Action Level	Range of Individual Results
Lead 15 parts per billion (ppb)	3 ppb	0	0 ppb - 5 ppb
Copper 1.3 parts per million (ppm)	0.5 ppm	0	0.0 ppm - 0.6 ppm

- As a reminder, further location of lead services lines throughout the City will be completed this spring. We will provide Council and the community a full report once that work is done.

Sheriff's Office Presentation

- Each month the Sheriff's Office provides a report of the number and types of calls they responded to.
- During the strategic planning meeting, Council requested an annual summary presentation and further education on police services.

- Sgt. Haas will be presenting the requested information at the February 24 regular meeting.

Capital Improvement Planning

- The Engineer and Department of Public Works have drafted updates to the five-year capital improvement plan. The draft plan will be presented at the February 24 workshop. Sneak preview. We have a lot of costly infrastructure work ahead.

Milfoil (Invasive)

- Last year, Aquatic Doctors presented to Council on their milfoil treatment in the harbor. I checked with them recently and they advised “there will be a need for treatment this summer. Low water levels will promote growth and impact the river. I would plan on some management, hopefully there is less growth than in the past”.
- I hope to bring treatment plans and costs to a Council workshop soon.

AT&T Cellular

- The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) recently sent AT&T a follow up letter regarding their September 24 submittal. The Federal Communications Commission has engaged in government-to-government coordination with the tribes.
- Review of the SHPO letter is planned for the February 19 workshop.
- AT&T’s decision on the City’s agreement request remains pending resolution of SHPO approval.

Maple Street Project

- The improvements currently under evaluation include:
 - Road resurfacing or reconstruction
 - Water main replacement (including replacement of services, some to inside the home/building)
 - Drainage and stormwater management improvements
 - Non-motorized improvements (widened shoulders, sidewalk, or similar)
- A review of the options and costs occurred at the Council’s January 22 workshop. The details are available in the meeting packet:
https://www.saugatuckcity.com/uploads/1/3/3/9/133977444/p_1-22-25_redacted.pdf
- Based on the Council’s feedback on the options, staff is preparing a proposed plan to pay for the project and discuss further at the February 24 workshop.

Mt. Baldhead Bathroom Replacement

- The project is now out for bid.
- Further review of the project is planned for the February 19 workshop.

Blue Star Trail

- I previously reported that MDOT received concerns from a Tribal Nation and MDOT started coordination. The coordination and additional assessment process will be lengthy and construction in calendar year 2025 is now unlikely.
- On site tribal evaluation is planned for this spring/early summer.
- As more details are known, MDOT will move the allocated TAP grant funding to future years and evaluate additional funding.
- I recently confirmed with the Department of Natural Resources that they are also willing to consider an extension of the trust fund grant.
- Staff is following up on the items that were discussed in the recent closed session.

Airport Property Project

- The ODC is still targeting early spring to work on the parking lot, trails, and signage. If the weather cooperates, the overlook may be able to be constructed this winter.
- Based on the consensus feedback from Council, the Parks and Public Works Committee will gather community feedback and recommend a new name for the property. City Council will make the final decision on any name change.

Upcoming Meetings

Full meeting packets are posted on the City website and Facebook prior to each meeting. When available, they can be viewed by selecting the board/commission:

<https://www.saugatuckcity.com/>

- February 19 at 4p– City Council Workshop Meeting
- February 20 at 6:30p – Planning Commission Meeting
- February 24 at 6:30p – City Council Regular Meeting
- February 25 at 10a – Parks and Public Works Committee Meeting

Blast from the Past

- Below is an article that was in the paper on February 3, 1972.
- As we work on an updated water-sewer agreement with KLWSA, its always interesting to learn about how it all got started. Do the names of the consultants look familiar to anyone?

Sewer System Called Costly but Needed

The proposed area sewer system for Saugatuck, Douglas and part of Saugatuck Township may cost its users less than originally estimated.

On the other hand it is still a very expensive project.

However, the construction and bond markets are attractive right now, a regional approach probably is the only way to get state and federal grants to help pay for the project, and if Saugatuck and Douglas do not proceed toward sewer improvements, the state may force them to proceed within five years.

These are some of the points developed in a three-hour review of the sewer project attended by about 60 persons Monday in the Douglas Village Hall. The meeting was conducted by the Regional Planning Commission, with speakers from engineering, bonding and financial firms.

John Paul Jones of Williams and Works, Grand Rapids engineering and planning firm, outlined studies made to determine land uses and population densities, on which sewer planning is based. Population is projected for about 10,000 in 1990, compared to an estimated 4,000 now in Saugatuck, Douglas and Saugatuck Township.

"You have a community here that's of a manageable size. Your problems therefore are of a manageable size," he said.

The aim is to concentrate new growth near the villages of Saugatuck and Douglas for economic use of facilities. Commercial development would be near existing commercial uses and near the north and south interchanges of Interstate 196. Industrial use would be concentrated south of Douglas and east of the Blue Star Highway.

Howard Witmer, chairman of the planning commission's sewer committee, said the Kalamazoo River has been polluted for many years from upstream food and paper plant wastes. Since 1967 restrictions have brought about an improvement in the river. The area of Saugatuck and Douglas has not yet been cited by the Water Resources Commission and ordered to improve its waste handling, but he said he believes it will be cited within five years.

Ed Fleis of Williams and Works outlined the preliminary

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nary report on the sewer system which was completed in February 1971. A regional approach was chosen to avoid duplication of facilities and to assist in receiving grants. The net cost to the customer will be less with a regional system, he said.

State and federal grants totaling 75 per cent of the cost are available for the treatment plant and for inter-municipal trunk lines. For the collector lines that run under individual streets, grants are available for 50 per cent of the cost over 10 per cent of a municipality's state equalized valuation.

Fleis said he has no doubt that the Water Resources Commission will require Saugatuck and Douglas to act. Few towns of their size are not planning sewers, he said.

He offered three reasons for a sewer system:

--A sewer will be needed if the area wants an industrial park, high-density housing, motels, and restaurants.

--Some parts of the area have clay soils not suited for septic tank systems.

--The costs of construction are rising at 10 to 12 per cent a year.

He estimated cost of the entire system at \$3,691,000. This includes \$830,000 for a treatment system, \$1,116,000 for trunk lines, \$80,000 for land and \$1,665,000 for local sewer lines.

Grants are available totaling \$1,591,000. This includes \$620,000 for the treatment plant, \$756,000 for trunk lines, and \$215,000 for local sewer lines.

This leaves a total local cost of \$2,100,000. A year ago the preliminary report estimated the local cost at \$2,488,000. Fleis said the difference is that grants are now estimated at 75 per cent of the cost for trunk and treatment facilities, rather than 55 per cent as in the preliminary report. The change is owing to different procedures on the state level.

Fleis said, "it is a very expensive project." There are various ways to finance it, with varying costs to the users, he said.

Robert E. Hammell of Miller, Canfield, Paddock

and Stone, a bonding company, said the aim in financing is to get the lowest available interest rate on bonds by offering the best available security for the bonds. He recommended having the Allegan County Department of Public Works handle the issue, giving it the backing of the county's tax base, as several other towns have done. Today's interest rate is about 5.29 per cent, he said.

Ways of raising money to pay off the bonds include taxes, special assessments, tap charges and monthly charges based on use.

Robert Bendzinski of Kenower, MacArthur & Co., financial consultants, recommended using all four sources to help pay for the system. He said construction and bond markets are favorable now. He questioned whether any grants would be received if the municipalities built separate systems.

Fleis estimated costs to the individual as this:

--A monthly charge of \$5.35 to pay for maintenance and operation of the system, and to pay for the trunk lines and treatment plant. If costs for future expansion were added the charge would go to \$10 a month.

--Additionally, paying for the collection system would cost approximately \$1,450 a customer. There are various ways to pay this, including taxes, front foot assessments and monthly charges, and varying lengths of payment.

Hammell said that there are proposals to increase the federal grant money. Sen. Edmund Muskie has offered a bill proposing grants up to 80 per cent. A House bill proposes grants of up to 90 per cent. There is no way of knowing what action will result on these proposals, he said.

Hammell was asked, since both Saugatuck and Douglas plan advisory referendums on the sewer proposals in March, what should the question say on the ballot?

He suggested using the dollar figures as expressed at the meeting.

"I'd hate to try and vote on it. Not enough is known," he said. In relation to other communities the cost is not out of line, he said.

Douglas Village President Joel Matteson said the residents of Douglas will be given a chance to vote on the proposal and the council will not "slide it through" while nobody is looking.

A verbal clash developed between Matteson and Ralph Galitz, chairman of the planning commission. Matteson said he thought there would be more confidence in the project if original members of the planning commission had remained on it. He said the elected officials are the ones responsible and they want to let the people decide. Galitz said if Matteson thinks the planning commission is trying to push something through, that is utterly ridiculous.

Mrs. John Bauer inquired if there will be a vote on the sewer for residents of Saugatuck Township. Supervisor Ralph Cartwright said none had been asked for.

Planner Jones said it is wrong to vote on the sewer on the basis of cost. He said it doesn't cost anything to pollute but costs a lot to get the pollution out. The sewer will benefit young people the most, he said. Without it, there is not going to be additional industry, and without industry there will be nothing to keep young people in the community, he said.