STATE OF THE TOWNSHIP, 2015

By

Timothy J. Braun, Supervisor

# Saginaw Charter Township

**Working together, we create new opportunities!**

Good afternoon. Thank you for attending today’s monthly meeting of the Saginaw Township Business Association and being a part of this special opportunity to celebrate business in our community. I would like the STBA board members to please stand. Thank you for supporting and promoting our local businesses.

I especially want to thank my wife Judi and my family for their love and support. I also want to recognize my fellow Township Board members for their service to our community. Our Township employees, led by our Manager Rob Grose, are hard working and very dedicated. Let’s thank our Board members, Rob, and all our employees for making Saginaw Township government so very well run. We also pause today to remember and thank our service men and women serving around the world to keep us safe and free.

I know all of us in this room are thankful for the blessings in our lives. We also feel very fortunate to live in a safe community. In fact, being a safe community is truly one of our deeply held Core Values. Public safety is the foundation of our community, and we know that the men and women of our Police and Fire Departments are committed to keeping us safe. I want to thank everyone gathered here today and Township residents across our community for supporting our police officers last August with your votes. Our officers know they have your support, and they look forward to keeping us safe for the next 15 years and beyond.

The overwhelming support for our Police Department demonstrates the optimism of you, our residents and business owners, and your positive outlook for the future of Saginaw Township. I hear your optimism every day as a number of you stop by to visit me at my office. Some of you just say hello and share a positive comment or two while quite a few of you ask me about a new business that is being built or one that is being expanded. Winston Churchill once said, “A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.” So many of you share your optimism with me, and I enjoy hearing your positive comments including your interest in the business growth occurring in our community.

The State Street, Bay Road, and Gratiot business corridors have been a real strength of ours for years, and being a safe community stimulates further growth and investment. Bridget Smith, our planner, worked with a number of businesses during the past year on a variety of new projects. Bridget and the Planning Commission reviewed and approved twenty-five different development projects, ranging in scope from a small church pavilion to the redevelopment of two large vacant sites. A total of 334 permits for construction were issued at a value of just over $19 million. In Saginaw Township we know that promoting business growth and creating jobs is vital to the future of our community.

We are gathered here today to celebrate our local businesses and their investment in our community; and in the Bay Road and Tittabawassee area there were a number of projects completed this past year. The relocation of Jack’s Fruit & Meat Market to the old Wolohan Lumber building required a large financial investment by owner Jack Stehle and hundreds of hours of work by his employees. This was also the case as property owner Mike Bierlein partnered with Suniva Inc., a solar module assembly company, to redevelop the former Sears Warehouse storage facility at Schust and Fashion Square Boulevard. I want to thank JoAnn Crary, Steve Jonas, and their team at Saginaw Future for working so hard to bring Suniva to us. Around the corner on Tittabawassee an $8.5 million renovation of the Sheraton Four Points Hotel was completed which also brought in a new Uno Pizzeria & Grill restaurant where Damon’s Grill was previously located. Over on Bay Road, Draper Toyota added a new service area and much needed space to make its operation more efficient. Rob Draper is to be commended for the major reinvestment he has made in his entire dealership.

Along State Street other work was undertaken. Saginaw Medical Federal Credit Union completed a large addition to its building which now makes the corner of Hemmeter and State especially attractive. A number of improvements were made at the McDonald KIA dealership on State St. while at the same time Bill McDonald also began renovation of the Arbor Plaza. Bill has redeveloped the interior of the building to include a classic car showroom and some space for parties, weddings, and meetings.

Other businesses opened or expanded their operations in the Township. Douglas Family Vision opened the doors of its new building at N. Center and Shattuck. What a beautiful addition to our community! Just up the road New Hope Valley assisted living community expanded its building by adding a very attractive wing.

Several other community development projects were undertaken. Just off Bay Road, Tuscany Villas, a residential condominium community, located on McCarty Road just north of the Soccer Complex, was approved for phase two of its development. This will result in the building of fifty-two single family units. As a result of a generous gift to honor Dr. Suryarao Kurumety, his family spearheaded the remodeling of the large meeting room at Zauel Library. This very beautiful room is available for a variety of public uses. A new back-up center for Saginaw County 911 dispatch was assembled in the basement of Fire Station 2 on McCarty Road. Construction was completed on the new Great Lakes PACE elder day care facility on Fashion Square Boulevard. Its services include a pharmacy, lab, physical and occupational therapy facilities, multipurpose rooms, and providing meals and transportation to those in need.

A feeling of optimism is once again growing throughout the Great Lakes Bay Region, and as we begin 2015 we are looking forward to additional business growth here in Saginaw Township. Since 2009 Saginaw Control and Engineering on Midland Rd. has grown steadily and made three major investments in equipment while adding employees. The company came to our Planning Commission in January with a new plan to build a 73,000 square foot addition - a 32% increase in the company’s floor space. New Hope Valley is adding additional living space to its facility this year with an entrance accessible off McCarty Road. Out on Tittabawassee, Ken Boomer is building a new Tim Hortons coffee and bake shop while further down the road Longhorn Steakhouse has plans to build.

Our Township employees work very hard to facilitate all this growth. Community Development department head, Matt Reno, has provided information and much guidance to residents and businesses regarding the recent changes in the federal laws regulating floodplains and flood insurance. Matt and his code enforcement staff work daily at keeping our community neat and clean by picking up and disposing of junk and debris along the roadways in front of businesses and residential homes. Throughout 2014, they acknowledged and recognized more than a dozen residential and commercial properties around the Township that made a noticeable reinvestment in their buildings and properties. Bridget Smith worked to update the Master Plan by reaching out to local business owners to hear their thoughts and ideas as to how various regulations could be crafted to serve their needs as well as the needs of the community well into the future. Bridget has also communicated with local sign companies regarding the upcoming 2016 deadline for reducing the size and height of commercial signs so that our businesses will be able to make the necessary changes as efficiently as possible.

We appreciate and value our local business owners and their commitment to the future of our community, and our entire Township staff takes great pride in being helpful. On two separate projects within the Township, construction contractors found themselves in a late December scheduling bind and needed inspection services to keep their work moving forward. Building inspector Ray Hausbeck came into work on Christmas Eve and performed his inspections which allowed the contractors, local suppliers, and the property owners to enjoy Christmas knowing that these projects could progress without delay.

I am proud to share more specific examples of our inspectors being helpful. During the remodeling of the new Jack’s location on Bay Road, a contractor inadvertently cut some rebar in the floor of the steel building which would have weakened the structure under load. Ray Hausbeck noticed this error and worked with the design professional on the project to correct the problem, keeping the project moving forward without delay and saving owner Jack Stehle major problems and expense in the future. During the reconstruction of the facade at the former Kmart on Bay Road, now Cube Smart an indoor storage facility, Ray noticed the contractor had not followed the framing detail on the construction plans. He worked with the owner’s representative, the contractor, and the design professional to redesign the facade to make it safe.

Our Community Development staff has recently helped other business owners. Over on the corner of Frost and Gratiot, Dr. Ryan Michelson completed an internal remodeling of his dental office. Our inspectors helped resolve concerns involving interior barrier free access and patient privacy. During the remodeling of the McDonald Used Cars property on State Street to accommodate the new KIA Dealership, our building inspectors, fire inspectors, and Bridget Smith worked very closely with owner Bill McDonald to develop a plan to relocate an existing driveway. More importantly, we advocated this driveway relocation plan to the Michigan Department of Transportation for its approval. Our staff has also been working very closely with representatives from Suniva and their design professionals to convert the old Sears warehouse building into a manufacturing facility. A plan has been implemented that balances building use, utilities, aesthetics, and compliance to various codes.

Our fire inspectors are very helpful, and I am proud to share a few examples. Many prospective business owners along with their realtors, contact us to do a courtesy walkthrough of a building they are considering purchasing. Our inspectors help them assess the condition of the building and what will be required to bring the building up to code from a fire safety standpoint. As they consider their investment, the help of our inspectors is greatly appreciated.

When Morley Companies was considering the purchase of the old AT&T building, Kevin O’Brien, Assistant Chief of Fire Prevention and Education, and Ray Hausbeck met Morley representatives Dick Mott and Andrew Sajdak to walk through and assess the building’s condition. The group found the building to be structurally sound and well maintained. Kevin noted that the existing fire alarm and standpipes were in good working order. He explained to Dick and Andrew that the design of the building would easily allow the installation of a fire sprinkler system. In fact, most of the costly parts of the system were already in place and in good working order. Based in part on the information gathered during that inspection, Morley Companies purchased the facility and went ahead and fully sprinkled the building.

Just recently, the groundbreaking ceremony was held to celebrate the construction of an additional 73,000 sq/ft. luxury independent living community at New Hope Valley. Several of our departments reviewed the architectural plans including Assistant Chief O’Brien. Kevin met with owner Rumi Shazaad and his architect to review the fire safety provisions. Part of this beautiful, new expansion includes separate townhomes that do not require a fire sprinkler system. Rumi, without hesitation, decided to include the system in the townhomes to provide the residents with added safety. When this project is completed, all of the buildings in this beautiful complex will be fully protected by fire sprinklers. Knowing that strong, successful businesses are essential to having a vibrant community, our Township employees strive to be helpful each and every day.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you have heard today the State of the Township is strong, and we are proud of the positive business environment we have in our community. Local business owners and regional developers feel welcome in Saginaw Township as our staff helps them overcome any obstacles they may face in locating here. Once they are open and growing their businesses, they also know we are committed to helping them prosper.

Saginaw Township’s close working relationship with our business community is evidenced in all the growth we have recognized today. The partnership we enjoy is even more promising as we look forward to the year ahead. Together, we will continue to create new opportunities and make great things happen!