

# STATE OF THE TOWNSHIP, 2011

By  
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Saginaw Charter Township

Saginaw Township – Believing in Our Core Values - Confident in Our Strengths –  
Optimistic about Our Future

## **Our strengths have created a promising future!**

Good afternoon everyone. I would like to begin by thanking the Saginaw Township Business Association for once again hosting this annual event. The success of Saginaw Township is undoubtedly tied to the success of our local businesses. The STBA's continued support for our Township government is greatly appreciated.

It is an honor and a privilege for me to stand before you and report the State of the Township. It is wonderful to see so many of you here today from all walks of life within our community – business owners and associates, elected officials, and other community leaders. I know you are here because you believe in our community. I especially want to thank our Township Board members and our outstanding staff for being here, and as always, my wife Judi.

Before we go to the business of today's address, I would like to take a moment to remember and honor the service of the men and women from Saginaw Township who are currently serving overseas in Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere around the globe. Our thoughts and prayers are with them for their safe return.

As I drafted this speech and reflected on the current State of the Township, I could not help but consider how things have changed the past three years. The economic foundation of our nation was shaken, and this has been an extremely difficult and trying time for all of us. The effects have also been felt at all levels of government - on the national stage, at the state level, and locally.

Our generation, unlike that of our parents, has grown up in a world relying on government for services, programs, and answers aimed at solving the social, economic, and political problems we face. This attitude has left us with record deficits at the national level and with dozens of states and municipalities around the country considering bankruptcy. It is not sustainable and does nothing to encourage the spirit of independence that has defined us as Americans.

We have been slow to learn that government cannot continue to be all things to all people, until recently, when our willingness to blame government has been even higher than the demands we have placed on it. Suddenly, driven by economic and political discord, we have realized that we must rethink what we expect from our government. Finally we have begun to understand that government alone cannot solve today's problems, as government alone is not responsible for them.

One of my goals today is to help you overcome the negative reports that are portrayed daily by the national and local media outlets and to provide each of you with optimism that Saginaw Township and the communities of the Great Lakes Bay Region are beginning to see signs of

economic recovery. Make no mistake; our future in this region is bright.

It is important to keep in mind that local government is a small piece of the equation; but never the less, it is the form of government that influences our lives on a daily basis. In 2011, local government must provide the framework for small businesses to prosper, for children to be inspired by the educational opportunities provided them, and where residents have support in their volunteer efforts. This can only be achieved if local government reaches out to partner with its residents and the private sector community. As we move forward it is important to keep in mind that government must serve, and our agenda for this new year will be modeled in that spirit.

The State of our Township is strong, and I am proud to share several of our strengths with you today. Our strength lies in how our Saginaw Township government operates. As I have said many times before, Saginaw Township functions in a manner similar to that of a successful business. We continually review the programs and services we offer keeping in mind that Township government is charged with providing a basic level of service to its residents in the most cost effective manner possible.

The first strength that stands out is the manner in which the Township conducts business. If we were unable to financially manage our own operations, it would be nearly impossible to sell Saginaw Township to investors and businesses. For us, financial planning is a strong point. Next Monday, March 14, the Township Board will be adopting a balanced General Fund Budget for Fiscal Year 2011-12, without appropriating any revenue from Fund Balance. Expenditures will total approximately \$6.9 million, less than any budget we have adopted since 2002.

How was this accomplished? We take great pride in being good stewards of the tax dollars you give us. We look at every part of our operation, every service we offer, and determine what adjustments in staffing, work assignments, and purchases we need to make. Making these changes is not easy, but we make them just as you do within your family or your business.

When faced with trying times and tough decisions Winston Churchill said, "Let our advance worrying become advance thinking and planning." Saginaw Township has used the economic crisis of the past three years as an opportunity to rethink, refocus, and restructure Township government for the future. We have worked hard to lay the foundation for a strong recovery and a promising future for our community.

Saginaw Township government establishes its priorities based upon its core beliefs, our core values. Our community core values unite us and keep us focused on our mission. We are proud that we are a safe community. We are proud of our beautiful neighborhoods including our business districts. We are proud of the quality of life we offer our families. We are proud that our government is well run and efficient.

We also take great pride in offering the highest level of service possible to our residents. Cutting services is rarely an option for us. Each of our departments has been challenged to improve or increase the level of service we offer while spending less. Achieving that goal results in a more efficient and cost effective organization.

We take on the tough issues with the expectation that ultimately we will do what is in the best interest of our community and its residents. Often times this requires taking a stance on an issue

that may or may not be popular. We analyze each issue we are confronted with and make every effort to understand all of the consequences of our decision. Our Township Board and its staff ask the tough questions. Why are we doing this? Should we be doing this? Is there a better, more efficient way of delivering this service? In the end, we take great pride in doing what we believe is right.

As I look around this room today, I see the real strength of Saginaw Township, our employees. They are the key to our success. It is impossible to do more with less without the absolute commitment of your employees. Our employees are among the best and brightest in their profession.

Their dedication and hard work extend well beyond their daily job responsibilities. It is explaining a property assessment notice in a kind and considerate tone with a gentle smile on your face. It is promptly setting aside everything you are working on to meet with a business owner or developer who unexpectedly walks in to your office with a proposal. It is fixing a water main break on a cold winter's night instead of waiting until morning. It is providing help and advice to a homeowner long after a fire has been put out and most of the trucks have returned to the fire station. It is picking up and bagging trash that has blown across a neighborhood after it was scattered by a wandering animal. It is listening to and calmly helping those involved in an accident well after the road has been swept up and the cars towed away. These are just a few examples of why I am so proud of our employees!

For several years now there has been a push for government to become more efficient through a "consolidation of services". Some have even suggested consolidating townships as the answer for creating efficiency. Saginaw Township does not believe that bigger government is better government. We believe that retaining local control and oversight carries with it responsibility and accountability. This in turn encourages innovative ideas and creative ways to improve local services while reducing costs. As we have, we will continue to collaborate with other municipalities and agencies from across Saginaw County when the opportunity arises and when there exists a mutual benefit to both entities.

In fact, during the course of this past year Saginaw Township, along with three other communities, created new partnerships for shared services. With the retirement of our long-time electrical inspector, an opportunity presented itself for us to contract with the City of Saginaw to share their inspector. During the summer another opportunity surfaced when Kochville Township's assessor resigned. Kochville's Supervisor, Jim Loiacano, knew that we were exploring ways in which to partner with adjoining communities and contacted our staff to determine our level of interest. After representatives from both communities met, Kochville Township decided to contract with us for assessing services. More recently, Bridgeport Township was seeking proposals to replace their plumbing and mechanical inspector. Upon learning of this opportunity, our staff reached out to their supervisor and manager and offered the services of our inspector. This partnership was officially ratified last month in the form of a contract for plumbing and mechanical inspection services.

The sluggish economy, along with declining revenues, created new opportunities for collaboration with the City of Saginaw, Kochville Township, and Bridgeport Township and for all of us to become more efficient by sharing services. These new partnerships will result in approximately \$80,000 in new revenues and savings to Saginaw Township annually, while reducing operational costs in the other communities. This clearly demonstrates what is

achievable when there is a mutual need and a mutual benefit for each party involved.

Having built a solid foundation, I am very optimistic about our future. Across our community we are seeing the signs for a strong recovery and have positioned ourselves to be a catalyst for helping our businesses grow and flourish. During 2010, your Saginaw Township Board of Trustees created the State Street Corridor Improvement Authority. The Township Board felt that charting the future of State Street would be best placed in the hands of local business owners and associates who have a vested interest in the corridor. The Authority Board has begun writing a long-term Development Plan for the district and will be holding public hearings seeking your input.

Our Planner, Bridget Smith, is working with a number of businesses helping them with their plans for expansion. Some major projects have already been announced. The Plaza North building was recently purchased by local investors and is in the process of being completely remodeled and converted into an office condominium project. The new Hampton Inn hotel located at the corner of Fashion Square Boulevard and Tittabawassee Road is under construction and is scheduled to open this fall. We all know Morley Companies has announced another major expansion with the addition of 911 jobs and an investment of \$7.7 million over the next five years. Once again, JoAnn Crary and her staff at Saginaw Future helped Morley secure a state tax incentive, coupled with the commitment of a local incentive on personal property taxes, which solidified the project moving forward.

When it comes to job creation Saginaw Township will continue to think beyond our own borders. We know that diversifying the Great Lakes Bay Region's economy will provide a variety of job opportunities that will benefit all of our communities. Expanding business opportunities does not come easily, but we have the two most essential ingredients. First, we are blessed with talented business leaders who have a clear vision of what our region can become, and they have continually demonstrated their commitment for growing our region's economy. Our other important asset is our highly talented work force, which has the knowledge, skills, and technical expertise essential for growing any company. I pledge to you that Saginaw Township will fulfill its role of fostering a positive business climate in our community by continuing to support our local businesses as well as those of the region.

All of us gathered here today, as well as our friends and neighbors across Saginaw Township, have faced the challenges of the last several years; and we have persevered. Every one of us, in our own way, found the courage to use this uncertain time as an opportunity to rely on our strengths while reassessing our priorities. We have emerged much stronger and more confident than before, believing our community has a promising future. At Town Hall we know it, and I'm confident you know it too!

The year that lies ahead is one full of promise and opportunity. I am excited about our prospects. The partnerships we have built among local governments, our residents, and our business community will continue to positively shape the Township's character and future. Together we can, and we will, handle the challenges that lie before us.

My message to you is stay involved, get active, join the effort to make Saginaw Township an even better place to live and raise a family. Let us leave here today committed to doing that little extra that will improve someone's life and the community in which we live.