



**To:** City Council

**From:** Rich LaBombard  
City Manager

**Date:** February 21, 2023

**Subject:** Monthly Department Activity Report  
February 2023

### **Assessor:**

Assessment notices have been ordered and I expect they will be out this week. With the strong real estate market over the past two years and the 5% increase to taxable values, I am anticipating a few more appeals than usual. Let's face it, no one likes to pay more taxes.

The 2023 audit conducted by the County on our preliminary assessment roll was solid with only a couple of questions that needed to be addressed.

Continuing work on many projects:

- Reappraisal using aerial maps – ongoing
- Processing incoming Property Transfer Affidavits
- Processing deeds monthly
- Processing monthly building permits
- Processing incoming Personal Statements

### **City Manager:**

**Michigan Spark Grant** – The City received word that we were not a recipient of the first round of the Spark Grant. The state awarded \$14,178,900 in grants to fund 21 projects state-wide. The City and Playground committee applied for funding to complete the playground plan at Schultz Park. There were 462 applicants for the first round totaling more than \$280 million in requests. Round 2 funding opportunity in the spring of 2023 will make \$25 million available. The grant application will be revised and resubmitted for the next round. There will also be a third round of funding for an additional \$25 million in the summer of 2023.

**Michigan Municipal Executives Conference** – Last week I attended the MME conference in Grand Rapids where I attended sessions on leading through crisis, planning and zoning, project management in crisis, land banks and brownfields as economic development tools, and a legislative session with lobbyists. A few noteworthy items came out of the legislative session. There is discussion about revising the open meetings act to modify the ability to have virtual meetings. In addition, the public notice process which relies heavily on newspaper publications is being discussed to allow other media to serve as official public notice options. This is a result of diminished newsprint publications in circulation. Also, there was discussion about the short-term rental

legislation. The presenters anticipate another attempt to get short-term rental legislation introduced in another form.

**City Council** – At the February 6<sup>th</sup> regular meeting of the City Council, the following items were approved:

- Escrow policy
- Updated fee schedule
- Revised the Board of Review meeting start date to Tuesday, March 14, 2023
- PM Environmental Change Order #3 to develop a work plan to dispose of construction material located at 200 Blue Star Highway

**Water Street Concerns** – At the upcoming Tuesday (February 21<sup>st</sup>) City Council workshop starting at 6:00 p.m. the City Engineer will lead a discussion about concerns that have come forward regarding the safety of pedestrians on Water Street related to speed, road geometrics, and road width. We hope to come out of the meeting with a ranked list of objectives that the City Engineer can price out for future capital planning.

**Interurban Tour** –I met with Phyllis at Interurban, and we discussed some insurance and benefit items that have resulted in financial savings. While at the facility, Phyllis gave me a tour and I met some of the staff. Interurban provides a valuable service to the community. I was surprised to learn that they employ 20 people including drivers, dispatchers, and a mechanic.

**Anti-discrimination and anti-harassment training** – Staff met with the City’s labor attorney on Friday (February 10) to go over anti-discrimination and harassment training. We learned about the responsibilities as an employer, protected classes, reasonable accommodation, responding to discrimination complaints, and avoiding retaliation. The City has recently strengthened its policies and procedures regarding discrimination and this training complements the new policy by providing managers and employees a basis for understanding and responding to discrimination and harassment claims. Also in attendance were staff from Interurban, the Saugatuck Township Manager, the Saugatuck Fire District Fire Chief, and several employees of Saugatuck City. In the future, the managers will attempt to coordinate with the other nearby agencies to pool resources and share training opportunities on issues that are germane to local government. This approach will save every municipality time and money if we can collaborate on training.

**Dredging of the Channel** –I participated in a meeting with Senator Peter’s office to discuss dredging of the river channel. From all indications, some of the present depths of the channel are near zero feet due to siltation when the channel should ideally be up to 14 feet deep. I’ll keep the community posted on progress of this item.

**Planning Commission** – The Planning Commission held its monthly meeting on February 9<sup>th</sup>. The Commission met about the Forest Gate development on Ferry Street, and sign ordinance revisions.

## **Clerk:**

**Elections** – Elections work for the Clerk’s office are now continuous, currently work is being conducted on the cleanup of master cards and the voter list. Any election mailings that have been returned to our office will now be sent a cancellation notice, and the voter has a set time to respond or be placed on a cancellation list by the State.

**Online Forms** - The online forms located on the website are being updated with the new logo, new fees, and will now be fillable online.

**Standard Operating Procedures** - All procedures which occur on a daily, weekly, monthly, or other timeframe are being completed and will be used by all newly hired personnel in the office.

**Education** - The Clerk is currently taking a nine-week course on Social Media Liability. This course covers liability, the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment as it pertains to social media, and Copyright laws as they pertain to social media.

**Short Term Rentals** - The City of Douglas (Clerk), The Saugatuck Township Manager, and the City of Saugatuck Planner all met with the Township Fire Department to discuss some of the main issues all communities are having with Short-term rentals. The Fire Department suggested limiting 2 people to a bedroom regardless of square footage, require a local agent within 10-mile radius to manage the home, and have a lodging tax that would go to the CVB. Other suggestions from those in attendance were to require the homeowner to submit a copy of the home insurance for record, apply an investigation fee to those who are renting without a permit, and address the need for more parking requirements/tickets.

Clerk Aalderink would like to request the City of Douglas look into the 2 people per bedroom requirement for safety reasons in the larger much older homes along Lakeshore.

## **Deputy Clerk:**

**ACCA Meeting** - In January the Clerk and I attended the Allegan County Clerks Association meeting, and it was a great event for me to meet many of our area Clerks. With the passing of Proposal 2 this was a good opportunity to connect with area Clerks and prepare insight on how this will affect our election process. I was also nominated as alternate representative for the West Michigan Regional Clerks Association or WMRCA and I will be attending my first meeting this month.

**Meetings Training** – The City Clerk continues with training me on meeting procedures, bylaws, minutes, resolutions, and ordinances. I have been attending our City's Board and Commission meetings and have conducted a couple as well. This has been very helpful for me with understanding the entire meetings process.

**Short Term Rentals/Building BS&A** - Work continues with organizing, uploading, and digitalizing our records of short-term rental applications and inspections. The continued process involves utilizing our Building Department program through BS&A. This will help streamline our tracking of renewals, failed/passed inspections, and payments for all short-term rental registrations. I will be providing our Fire Inspector with hands on training of the program this week, in hopes that it will help aid their process as well.

**MAMC Institute** - In March I will be attending the Michigan Association of Municipal Clerks Institute in Mt. Pleasant. This weeklong course is the first step in the three-year institute program for clerk certification. This week I have received my class roster and so far, there will be 100 others attending from municipalities throughout our state. It will be a great chance to network with Clerks statewide. I am excited for all the direct training, and I am looking forward to learning and understanding the duties of City Clerk.

## **Police Department:**

	January	Fiscal Year	YTD
<u>Complaints Answered/Investigated:</u>	149	1,169	149
<u>Criminal Arrests/Filings:</u>			
Felony:	01	07	01
Misdemeanor:	03	23	03
<u>Warrant Arrests:</u>	0	04	0
<u>Traffic Enforcement:</u>			
OWI/OUID/Impaired Driving Arrests:	01	06	01
OWI High Blood Alcohol Content:	00	02	00
Traffic Stops:	52	370	52
Civil Infraction:	03	26	03
<u>Community Contacts:</u>			
Personal Contacts:	1,095	7,567	1,095
Business Contacts:	191	1,544	191
Property Security Checks:	818	7,289	818
<u>Foot Patrol:</u>			
1,421 Minutes (23 Hours & 41 Minutes)			
<u>Felony Charges: (January)</u>			
Flee/Elude 3 <sup>rd</sup> Offense			
<u>Misdemeanor Charges: (January)</u>			
Domestic Violence/Assault			
Malicious Destruction of Property			

## Operating While Intoxicated

### Activity Time on Follow Up Investigations: (January)

1,325 Minutes. (22 Hrs. & 5 Minutes)

Number of January Follow Up Investigations: 48

### Investigation of Felony Cases:

Larceny (22-1742): Open.

Larceny (22-1793): Open.

Fraudulent Checks (22-1496): Open.

Stolen Watercraft (#21-1420): Open.

Robbery Armed Huntington ATM: (20-1827): Open.

Fraud (22-0091): Open.

Fraud (22-0133): Open.

Fraud (22-1261): Open.

### Out of Jurisdiction Responses: (January)

#### Saugatuck City:

- 23-0037: Back up Sheriff's Office with a Suspicious Person/possible Larceny Suspect.
- 23-0135: Respond to a report of a vehicle possibly into the river/Closest LE available/Saugatuck LE not on duty. Upon arrival the vehicle crashed into large rocks which stopped it from entering the river. The State Police handled the OWI & Child Endangerment Investigation/Arrest.

#### Saugatuck Township:

- 23-0125: Our Officer was attempting to catch up with a vehicle matching a Domestic Violence Suspect and had to stop to address a semi tractor-trailer blocking Bluestar Highway.

#### Laketown Township:

- 23-0116: Requested back up for the Sheriff's Office on a traffic stop and arrest.

Total Out of Jurisdiction Responses for January: 04

Total Complaints Handled within Douglas City for January: 145

### Meetings/Events: (January)

Douglas Elementary School with STFD for instruction of Safe Kids Program in the classrooms on January 5<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>.

### Noteworthy Incidents: (January)

23-0012: On Tuesday 01/03/23 at 1:59 am Officer Dyer was dispatched to the 200 block of Harbor Lake Drive for a Domestic in Progress. Prior to Officer Dyer's arrival the 25 year old suspect had

fled from the scene in his vehicle possibly back to the Caledonia area. After investigation and submission to the County Prosecutor a two count Misdemeanor Warrant exists for the suspect for Domestic Violence/Assault and Malicious Destruction of Property. After contact with Barry County Probation there is also a Probation Violation pending.

23-0030: On Friday 01/06/23 at 10:58 pm Allegan Central Dispatch notified LE that South Haven City Police were pursuing a Suspect Vehicle Northbound on Bluestar near 118<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Officer Brown set up near the South City Limits. Radio communication indicated that the Suspect Vehicle was now travelling East on 118<sup>th</sup> Avenue however that was incorrect, and the Suspect Vehicle was continuing North on Bluestar. Officer Brown observed the Suspect Vehicle approaching the City and it was too late at that point to deploy stop sticks. Officer Brown at the request of South Haven City took primary due to being familiar with the area. The Suspect Vehicle continued North and braked sharply and turned the vehicle into the path of Officer Brown causing a collision. The Suspect Vehicle then proceeded South on I-196 from Exit 41 and stop sticks were deployed near the 26 Mile Marker where the Suspect Driver stopped the vehicle, fled on foot, and was taken into custody and turned over to the South Haven Police for lodging in VanBuren County. Damage was done to Patrol Vehicle #1 and said damage was confirmed to be damage allowing the vehicle to continue patrol operations. Vehicle #1 is scheduled for repair in the near future. Our Department has also obtained a Felony Fleeing Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> Degree Warrant for the Suspect Driver a 24 year old Grand Rapids area man. I am pleased to note that Officer Brown and all other involved Officers were not injured in the incident.

23-0040: On Thursday 01/09/23 at 1:49 pm Cpl. Warsen was dispatched to the 6800 block of Wiley Road to investigate a Domestic Violence that occurred earlier between clients on the property. After investigation and submission to the County Prosecutor's Office a Warrant for Domestic Violence/Assault has been authorized on the 34-year-old male Suspect with an unknown permanent address.

23-0066: On Saturday 01/14/23 at 1:18 pm I was dispatched to the 100 block of South Bluestar Highway for a Disorderly Customer. Upon arrival the customer had left the scene. It was determined that the event was not criminal at this point and the Suspect was issued a written Trespass/Harassment Notice by the Director.

23-0077: On Thursday 01/16/23 at 10:20 pm Officer Brown stopped a vehicle on Bluestar Highway South of Wiley Road. Upon investigating further the Driver a 51 year old female from the Fennville area was determined to be under the influence, and arrested for Operating while Intoxicated, and was later lodged at the Allegan County Jail. A search warrant was obtained, and eventual lab results indicated a blood alcohol content of .175

23-0134: On Saturday 01/28/23 at 12:29 pm I responded to a call of an 80-year-old that had fallen on ice in the parking area of the 0 block of Wiley Court. Upon arrival neighbors were tending to the patient and she received additional treatment and care from STFD and AMR Ambulance however eventually refused transport by the Ambulance Service.

The Department also responded to the following types of calls during January: Fraud complaint, hit & run vehicle crash, property damage vehicle crashes, vehicle/deer crashes, bond violation investigation, noise complaints, suspicious person/vehicle/situation complaints, check welfare complaints, medical emergencies, harassment complaints, reckless/careless driving complaint, residential and business alarms, conservation complaints, a dog bite complaint, running dog complaints, an attempt to locate a domestic violence suspect, and general assistance/non-criminal calls.

## **Project Management:**

**Planning and Zoning Assistance** – Continue to meet with Williams and Works as the interim Planning and Zoning contact. Receive zoning review applications, sign applications, and fence applications and process them with either Williams and Works or Michigan Township Services. Continually learn the procedure of flow for each application and filing them accordingly. Assisted residents with application submittals and directed them to Williams and Works with questions I'm unable to answer. Created public notice for Planning Commission. Arranged and published the agenda packets and answered questions by Commissioners. Assist with citation or abatement mailings.

**Refuse Agreement** – Continue to work on the final agreement with Republic.

**Permit Applications** – Continue to improve and recreate outdated forms for Planning and Zoning needs. Update the fees according to the new schedule of fees and add an online payment link.

**FY 22-23 & FY 23-24** – Scheduling of various capital improvement projects. The proposed mill & overlay and chip & fog seal work is out for bid with bid opening on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Starting to gather quotes for FY 23-24 for the budget process and update worksheets for upcoming meetings.

**DPW** – Assist with ordering supplies, permit requirements, and updating list of various DPW items.

**Deer Survey** – Receiving and organizing deer survey results as they come in. Prepared memorandum for City Council based on results of survey.

**Surplus Real Property** – Created a Request for Bid for the disposal of Real Property located in the City of Douglas deemed surplus.

**EGLE Energy Grant** – Applied for an energy grant for the Police Department Facility. If awarded, the Police Department will receive a new furnace & A/C unit, as well as new lighting.

## **Public Works Department:**

**Downtown** - With recent snow melt and rain events, the DPW has been observing and cleaning debris away from drains, ditches, and catch basins.

**Road Maintenance** - DPW crews have filled in potholes on Wiley, Main, Randolph, and 129<sup>th</sup> Street. The mechanical broom on the loader has been used several times to remove dirt and gravel from roadways.

**Budgeting** - DPW continues to work on getting quotes for the upcoming FY 23/24 capital expense meetings.

**Schultz Park** – The Christmas tree pile and brush throughout the park has been picked up and taken to a local contractor. Dock repairs at the boat launch are scheduled before needing to be reset in the water.

**Equipment** – The holder tractors' coolant and hydraulic lines needed repair work. The new plow truck has been sprayed with Woolwax automotive undercoating to protect the undercarriage. New

tires have been installed on the DPW ¾ ton pickup truck. The chainsaws have had necessary maintenance performed in preparation for high winds. All plow trucks, loaders, and pickups have all been washed and had interiors detailing to protect the City's investments.

**Facilities** - City Hall has had reoccurring furnace issues that have been resolved. Beery bathrooms have been cleaned thoroughly and had necessary light bulbs replaced. The mezzanine at the DPW garage has been cleaned and organized. Fire extinguishers, AEDs, and the eyewash station have all been inspected per requirement.

**Misc.** - Miss Digs have been completed as required in the allotted time frame by flagging and painting. Designated employees have been completing required training and testing per new standards. Two employees have passed their exam and are now considered "Member/Full", which allows full access through the Miss Dig system. G.I.S. mapping is ongoing as weather allows.

## **Treasurer:**

**Taxes** - Tax bills were due February 14<sup>th</sup>. The Treasurer's office received a flurry of payments over the last month. The City allows 75 days for payment to be made without any penalty being applied. The City allows residents to sign up for a tax autopay program, allows payments online, accepts payments in person, thru the mail, or payments can be dropped into the drop box in front of City Hall. Starting on February 15<sup>th</sup> a 3% penalty was added to any unpaid bills. This year there were 85 unpaid winter tax bills down from 140 the year before and 215 two years ago. The City will continue to collect tax payments through the end of the month. On March 1<sup>st</sup> any unpaid tax bills will be turned over to the Allegan County Treasurer for collection. They can be reached at 269-673-0260.

**Budget** - The past month has been busy with reviewing the budget for mid-year budget adjustments. Additionally, I have been rolling forward many of the behind the scenes documents and schedules to start compiling information for next year's budget. City staff have been busy getting quotes for potential capital purchases for next year. Similar to last year, 4 strategic planning workshops are planned to start in March. This is a long process with lots of moving parts and many workshops for the Council to attend to provide input. A full budget workshop is scheduled for May 15<sup>th</sup>. The goal is to have the public hearing and adopt next fiscal year's budget at the June 5<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**Electronic Payments and Receipts** - The past few years the Treasurers department has worked on providing to the residents way to make payments electronically through online credit card payments, e-checks, and through a tax autopay program. During the 2022 tax season thru the winter tax due day, electronic payments of over a million dollars were made. Similarly an effort has begun to convert from mailing paper check to sending ACH payments to our vendors. This project just began in late 2022, but roughly 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the invoices Council has approved the last couple of meetings were paid electronically.

**Economic Conditions** - The past few years has been a bit of a wild ride for inflation. As shown in the table below:

Period	Year over year inflation
June 2020	0.6%
December 2020	1.4%
June 2021	5.4%
December 2021	7.0%
June 2022	9.1%
December 2022	6.5%

As inflation moved upwards towards 40-year highs the Federal Reserve began increasing rates to help combat inflation. While doing this the Federal Reserve keeps an eye on unemployment and other



economic indicators to try to avoid a recession while pushing inflation down. Unemployment was quite high at the beginning of the pandemic peaking at roughly 14.7% but has been under 4% for all of 2022. It appears that inflation is starting to cool down, however the Federal reserve has indicated it may take until 2025 to reach their target of 2% inflation. The slowing inflation will likely allow the Federal Reserve to slow the pace of interest rate hikes, but the remaining low unemployment leaves them the option of larger rate hikes.

**Cash Balances** - The City's cash balances were down from last month. This was primarily related to the timing of property tax receipts and disbursements to the other taxing authorities.

**City Revenues and Expenses** - Revenues and expenditures were generally consistent with where we would expect for this point of the year. However, as is typically the case, mid-year budget amendments were needed to clean up some accounts. These budget amendments were presented to Council tonight and if approved will be reflected in next month's reports.