



# COUNTY OF SAGINAW

## OFFICE OF COUNTY CONTROLLER

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# MEMORANDUM

April 20, 2023

TO: Board of Commissioners  
FROM: Robert V. Belleman  
Controller/CAO  
RE: **2019/2020 BOARD PRIORITIES – UPDATE**

The Board of Commissioners met on March 8 and 9, 2019 to undertake strategic planning and develop Board Priorities to **Enhance the quality of living in our community**. These Board Priorities were used to guide the development of the proposed Fiscal Year 2023 Budget. The Board identified three Priorities – **Quality of Life; Accessibility of Services; and Revenue/Cost Control/Efficiency** which are set forth below. I would like to elaborate on specific elements and/or current efforts that meet these Priorities.

**ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT & RECREATION GOAL:** Provide diverse, high-quality events and activities that educate, recreate, and entertain.

- 1. Increase overnight tourism through continued partnership with Saginaw County Convention and Visitors Bureau.** The County continues to levy its 5 percent accommodations (Hotel/Motel) Tax pursuant to County Ordinance #103. The FY 2023 budget estimated collection of approximately \$3 Million with 75% of those taxes collected in Frankenmuth being retained by the Frankenmuth CVB and the remainder being retained by the Saginaw County CVB for marketing and programming efforts. The County Treasurer retains 5 percent of the hotel tax collected for administrative costs. Dr. Rummel has recently inquired about ensuring this accommodation tax is collected from private property owners renting their property through VRBO and Airbnb. These tax dollars are used to directly market Saginaw County and indirectly the Great Lakes Bay Region. The Saginaw County CVB and Frankenmuth CVB leverage these tax dollars to draw one thousand visitors to our area every year. In fact, 2022 has seen a strong rebound in hotel/motel occupancy since the pandemic. The Saginaw County CVB annually proposes to invest a portion of these room tax dollars into community economic development activities. Dr. Rummel identifies specific projects in her budget presentation to the Board of Commissioners.

**2. Ensure adequate funding to continue providing high-quality entertainment facilities and draw visitors from all over to The Dow Event Center and Jolt Credit Union Event Park.** The FY 2023 budget includes the voter approved millage increase of 0.225 mills for the DOW Event Center. The Dow is also just completing an approximate \$15 million capital investment to replace the ice chiller plant used for the Saginaw Spirit hockey and other ice entertainment (i.e. Disney on Ice); to replace the roof and arena air handling units; add heat and hot water to original arena restrooms; to repair the parking structure, upgrade lighting and replace both elevators, which are used by other downtown entertainment venues such as the Temple Theater and Jolt Credit Union Event Park along with the Heritage Theater. These venues have drawn over 126,000 visitors to a variety of events over the first 7 months of the current fiscal year. The Board of Commissioners at its March 21, 2023 and April 18, 2023 Board Sessions authorized Capital Investments estimated at \$8,649,967 million to host the CHL Memorial Cup. The 2024 CHL Memorial Cup is expected to generate 6,000-8,000 hotel rooms and a direct spend of \$20 million for this region.

**3. Promote Saginaw County Parks and provide diverse recreational opportunities and programs to satisfy all age groups and levels of ability.** The Saginaw County Parks and Recreation Commission is 95% complete with a splashpad and playground addition at Haithco Recreation Area, which had a soft opening this Memorial Day Weekend. To say that it is an early hit is an understatement, with nearly 800 vehicles visiting the park on Memorial Day alone (500 vehicles was Haithco's highest day on record in the last decade prior to Monday). The project also included 1000 feet of accessible pathway, additional ADA parking, and universally accessible features on both the playground and splash pad. Additional needs at Haithco remain, including complete entry drive resurfacing, additional accessible pathways (including a connector path to Commission on Aging), and restroom renovations. The parks & Recreation Commission has submitted an ARPA Funding Request for Haithco Recreation Area that would allow them to continue the remaining work this summer, or early 2023 at the latest. The entrance drive project is currently budgeted in Parks proposed FY 2023 budget, though ARPA allocations would allow those funds to shift to additional park projects.

The Parks and Recreation Commission has submitted grants to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund for Imerman Memorial Park (\$650,000 total, \$350,000 matching funds) and Price Nature Center (\$194,000 total, \$100,000 matching funds) for improvements at these parks. Imerman improvements include a renovation of the boat launch, addition of a canoe kayak launch, accessible pathways throughout the park and the addition of an ADA compliant/family style restroom unit. Price Nature Center improvements include an accessible pathway from the parking lot to the pavilion/playground area and the addition of an ADA compliant / family style restroom unit.

The Parks and Recreation Commission is prioritizing projects that eliminate ADA deficiencies identified in the Saginaw County Parks ADA Transition Plan Update completed in 2021. Many of these projects provide additional benefit beyond eliminating the ADA deficiencies, like the family restroom units for example.

Saginaw County Parks also recently received notification that the State of Michigan is investing \$867,000 of State of Michigan ARPA funding in the Saginaw River Headwaters Rec Area (former Malleable Iron) project – with additional scope of design and construction of new paved entrance and paved trails at entrance. We are thrilled that the



State of Michigan is prioritizing Saginaw, and its parks, through their available ARPA funding. ARPA investment at the County level across our entire parks system will pay dividends for many future generations to come.

**EMPLOYMENT GOAL:** Collaborate with government, business, and educational institutions to increase education and employment opportunities.

- 1. Advance economic growth and employment through continued funding and collaboration with Saginaw Future Inc.** The FY 2023 General Fund budget includes an annual base contribution of \$50,000 to Saginaw Future Inc. and the opportunity to earn an additional \$150,000 when Saginaw Future Inc. achieves the agreed upon metrics associated with (1) Job Creation, (2) Investments (property tax revenues) and (3) Government Contracts. Saginaw Future, Inc provides administrative support to the Saginaw County Economic Development Authority and the Brownfield Authority.
- 2. Provide quality educational programs and services in skilled trades by partnering with organizations like Great Lakes Bay Michigan Works!, K-12 education and local universities and colleges.** County of Saginaw is one of five (5) Counties that created Great Lakes Bay Michigan Works! who provide workforce development programs to Saginaw County and regional businesses. The FY 2023 proposed budget includes Great Lakes Bay Michigan Works! programs.
- 3.** Additionally, the Saginaw Health Department has established an affiliation with Central Michigan University to create an “Academic Health Department.” The Health Department continues its relationship with University of Michigan school of Public Health Training Center for collaboration on public health training and employs interns. The FY 2023 Health Department budget includes grant funding for “Health Resource Advocates” in local school districts.

**HEALTHCARE GOAL:** Provide affordable healthcare and services and ensure equal access to healthy choices and opportunities.

- 1. Address growing health issues related to obesity and chronic illnesses, dental health, HIV/AIDS, maternal, child and infant health and behavioral health.** The FY 2023 budget supports community health assessment priorities associated with the new initiative BWell Saginaw addressing maternal and child health, obesity, and mental health programming. The FY 2023 budget also includes funding to promote My Community Dental Centers program.
- 2. Engage in community partnerships with local healthcare providers, serving as a leader to identify and address community health needs.** The Saginaw County Health Officer and Medical Director have developed strong partnerships with local healthcare providers through “Med Control” to respond to the Covid pandemic and is evolving into addressing other community health needs. Additionally, the Saginaw County Board of Health was restructured to include representatives from Ascension St. Mary, Covenant, CMU, Saginaw ISD, and other community partners and consumers. To further collaborate on identified community health needs, the newly branded BWell Saginaw Partner Coalition is being developed, led by the Saginaw County Health Department.

- 3. Promote awareness of public health issues and healthcare sources.** The Saginaw County Health Department recently launched its BWell campaign (building resiliency) to inform and engage Saginaw County businesses and residents. Employees and residents receive up-to-date information via Facebook and on the Health Department's website about community health assessment priorities in addition to information on other health services.

Saginaw County Health Department has a goal to move Saginaw County overall health rankings from 71st out of 83 counties to "Top 25".

The Saginaw County Health Department Mission is "Protect, preserve and promote a healthy community and environment for all."

The Health Department's vision is "Innovative leader, partner and service provider assuring a healthy and safe community."

The Health Department, the Board of Health, and partners will leverage the voter approved millage, the General Fund FY 2023 contribution and grant fundings to address the Community Health Assessment priorities as well as creating the necessary infrastructure to enhance the overall health of the community.

Additionally, the Health Department has "kicked off" its triannual Community Health Assessment which affords all residents an opportunity to provide feedback on community health issues and healthcare gaps.

The Coronavirus pandemic "shined" a light on our vulnerable community members who lack access to quality, routine medical care.

**HOUSING GOAL:** Increase opportunities for individuals to live in safe housing to reduce the risk of homelessness.

- 1. Improve quality of assisted housing and increase assisted housing choices.** This objective is being met through other public and private agencies.
- 2. Promote Self-Sufficiency.** The County has received several funding requests under the American Rescue Pan Act of 2021 to support "self-sufficiency," around housing by providing quality housing for low/moderate income residents or personal financial management services. MSU Extension has submitted an ARPA Funding Proposal to continue its programs and services in the County.
- 3. Serve the needs of child and adult victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.** The County's FY 2023 budget includes funding for the Prosecutor's Victim Rights office (\$217, 980) and a contribution to Underground Railroad twenty-five (\$25,000) along with free office space in the Courthouse & Governmental center to assist women of domestic violence with securing Personal Protection Orders (PPO).



## **SAFETY GOAL: Maintain community safety and make court processes more efficient.**

- 1. Implement paperless record keeping system to create efficiencies and free up resources.** The County of Saginaw, for the past two years, has been investing nearly \$10.7 million to transition from our antiquated Mainframe System, which uses COBOL to five (5) different software packages including, but not limited to Prosecution by Karpel, Odyssey, and JAILTRACKER, which incorporates a paperless record keeping and other features that will create efficiencies, and ultimately, free up resources. These systems are scheduled to “go-live” in June 2022 and we anticipate realizing many of the benefits by the end of the first quarter FY 2023.
- 2. Maintain staffing at Public Safety departments.** The Sheriff’s Department will maintain a sworn personnel level at 58. The greatest challenge in attracting and retaining law enforcement personnel will be competitive wage and benefits.
- 3. Retain Employees through personal and professional development opportunities.** The Board of Commissioners at its May 7, 2022 regular session approved a contract with VirTra Inc. for simulated Firearm Equipment and Training Services. The new training program will be available to law enforcement personnel and corrections officers. Additionally, the Saginaw County Sheriff’s Department maintains an annual subscription service with Lexipol for updated policies and procedures impacted by changes in federal and state laws. Deputies and correction officers are required to complete routine training sessions on these policies and procedures.

## **ACCESSIBLE SERVICES**

*Making critical services within reach for everyone.*

### **CENTRALIZED SERVICES GOAL: Centralize County services into one County campus.**

- 1. Install drop boxes and electronic kiosks in the County Building to easily access services.** The County installed a drop box in front of the Courthouse and Governmental Center for residents to provide payments or submit documents to the Courts or County offices. The Sheriff’s Department has a payment kiosk for inmates held at the Saginaw County Jail. The County continues to explore other opportunities to install kiosks for after-hours transactions to benefit residents who cannot arrive during normal business hours.
- 2. Provide mobile healthcare and education services dispatched from central locations.** The Health Department has purchased and is utilizing two mobile clinics (a van and a Class A motorhome) to provide immunization and other mobile clinics throughout Saginaw County.
- 3. Maximize Building usage through collaboration.** The FY 2023 General Fund budget includes approximately \$20,000 for the Saginaw County Medical Examiner’s office to co-locate within the current Health Department building. The County is also evaluating a new location for Mosquito Abatement Commission facility so the current property can be sold to the Public School District of the City of Saginaw. The relocation of Mosquito Abatement Commission may result in the Maintenance Department relocating to the Courthouse or another suitable facility with more effective use of its storage facilities on Hospital Road. Additionally, the County is exploring the relocation of the Controller’s Office, Clerk’s Office, Treasurer’s Office, and Public Works office to accommodate space expansion and



enhance coordination of services within existing County facilities including the former Sheriff Administration Building and Courthouse.

- 4. Direct resources towards opiates, pre-trial supervision, and bail reform.** Community Correction Advisory Board has recommended to the Board of Commissioners the filing of a \$670,351 Michigan Department of Corrections Community Correction Grant to fund an opiates program through TriCap and pre-trial services. The County is monitoring and adjusting to “bail reform.” The Board of Commissioners, at its January 18, 2022 regular session, authorized the County to secure a third party in providing tether services at a reduced cost to defendants. Additionally, the FY 2023 budget includes \$100,000 in the PLUS Home Confinement Fund to cover possible costs associated with indigent defendants who the Courts place on the tether program but may not be able to afford a portion or all the \$7 per day tether fee.

**ROADS GOAL:** Improve transportation systems to achieve ease of mobility and safe travels by partnering with road agencies

- 1. Perform maintenance, reconstruction, resurfacing and drainage work on high-need roads.** The road commission has 9 paving projects, 100 miles of primary road chip sealing and 75 miles of local chip sealing in progress for FY 2022. Going into FY 2023 they will be adding 2 additional paving projects; Dixie Hwy- Fort to Hess and Hess Road-Towerline to Ruff, 100 miles of primary road chip seal, and 2 bridge super structure replacements. The road commission continues to partner with Saginaw County cities and townships, including Merrill, Chesaning, Zillwaukee, and the City of Saginaw.
- 2. Meet state standards for safety, pavement conditions, bridge conditions and travel time reliability.** Bridge Funding has continued to fall behind our needs, that said, bridge funding at the state level is set to increase over the next few years. Two noted projects for FY 2023 will be the Fordney over Beaver Creek and Hemlock Road over the South Branch of the Bad River.
- 3. Improve our road quality rating.** The road commission currently meets or exceeds all state standards for safety, pavement conditions, and travel time reliability. With increased state revenues, primary road pavement conditions have been steadily improving.

**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY GOAL:** Design and implement modern technology to streamline processes, functions, and capabilities.

- 1. Update Information Technology Systems.** The Board of Commissioners, at its August 27, 2019 regular session, authorized the sale of a \$10.7 million bond issue to transition from the County’s mainframe system to five (5) software systems. For the past two years the County Information Technology Department, with the assistance of Berry Dunn, solicited proposals from software companies and ultimately selected Tyler Munis for its Enterprise resource planning (ERP) system for financials, Human Capital Management (HCM) (personnel and payroll); Tyler Eagle for the Clerk’s Vital Records system; Tyler Odyssey for Court Case Management; JailTracker for Jail Management and Probation; and Prosecution by Karpel. This investment will ensure long-term technology needs are met.
- 2. Transition common services from in person/manual to online and mobile-enabled**

**through department portals and virtual staff training programs.** The Coronavirus pandemic forced municipal organizations to transition to online services such as, judicial hearings via Zoom, Court cases displayed on YouTube, Friend of the Court on-line portal; and employees working remotely. The County Clerk has an online portal to purchase Vital Records. The Register of Deeds has for several years established a service whereby property owners and/or Title companies can acquire property deeds online. The County is evaluating a Citizen Self Service Portal, which would allow businesses and residents to make payments online. The County has deployed virtual training programs as have many of our professional associations.

- 3. Digitize operations for efficiency and user-friendly access for all.** The County's \$10.7 million investment in transitioning from its Mainframe system to five (5) software packages will create more user-friendly technology and encourage additional expansion of efficiency and user-friendly access for all.

## **REVENUE & COST CONTROL EFFICIENCY**

*Efficiently leveraging our resources to create an attractive and thriving community.*

**FUNDING GOAL:** Create and improve upon revenue-generating initiatives.

- 1. Promote the 2020 Census to ensure adequate federal funding.** In 2020, the County of Saginaw partnered with the City of Saginaw to host various census events encouraging residents, especially in low response census tracks, to complete their census questionnaire. The County had received a \$50,000 grant through the Michigan Municipal League to cover costs associated with these events and to purchase marketing items (coffee mugs, bags, stickers, etc.) used in promoting the importance of the Census for Saginaw County. The County also partnered with the Saginaw Community Foundation to communicate what completed censuses meant to the County in federal aid.
- 2. Allocate additional resources to grant writing.** The County provides all its grant writing in house. We could benefit from identifying and employing a professional grant writer or create a Public Relations position who would be responsible in marketing the county and assisting departments in securing additional grant dollars. The FY 2023 General Fund Budget includes a new Social Media Coordinator position that would market the County via social media, inform residents of programs and services and assist departments in securing additional grant funding.
- 3. Explore revenue-generating services related to the internet, Harry Browne Airport, toll roads, bridges, office space, vacant properties, and the County jail.** The Sheriff's Department rents beds to the US Marshall Service generating \$613,000, which is used to support Law Enforcement services and the PLUS Home Surveillance services. Information Technology is constructing an "off-site" backup center at SCACC, which the County intends to rent digital space to other municipalities. Harry Browne Airport rents land and hangars to private airplane owners and sells gasoline to pilots.

The County should consider developing the former bank property at Michigan Avenue and Cass Street into a restaurant/coffee shop which could be leased. Many employees and visitors to the Courthouse & Governmental Center would be customers of this new



restaurant and/or coffee shop.

The Saginaw County Landbank sells its tax reverted properties to interested buyers. The Landbank also assembles property for economic development projects.

The County, through the Saginaw County Economic Development Corporation, continues to market and develop the Great Lakes Tech Park at M46 & M52, which currently is home to Fullerton Tools and Saginaw Controls & Engineering.

4. **Evaluate fees and service charges.** The County as part of its annual budget process requests Elected Officials and Department Heads to review the County's Fee Schedule and recommend adjustments to ensure fees cover the cost of providing services.
5. **Implement Saginaw County marketing plan in collaboration with Saginaw Future, Inc.** Saginaw Future, Inc. continues to market available land for future development. Saginaw Future also assists existing businesses with expansion needs. The County also partners with Saginaw County CVB and the Chamber of Commerce to market the county as a safe place to work, live and visit. The FY 2023 General Fund budget includes a new position entitled, Social Media Coordinator to enhance the use of social media in communicating with our residents, businesses, and visitors. With the absence of a daily newspaper, I believe it is imperative for the County to ensure our residents and businesses are aware of our programs, services, projects, and successes.
6. **Stimulate business growth through incentives and investment-friendly policies.** The County has adopted policy #254, "Economic Development Commercial Rehabilitation Act (CRA)", to incentivize investment in economically distressed properties eliminating blight and creating jobs through commercial investment. The Board of Commissioners recently approved a CRA project in the village of Merrill. The County currently has 14 Downtown Development Authorities, 38 Industrial Facilities Taxing districts, and 1 Brownfield Redevelopment Plan with tax capture, which allows capture of investments to encourage cities, townships, and villages opportunities to make infrastructure investments and to reimburse developers for eligible development costs. The County, through its Treasurer, has approved the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program, which "is a financing tool that encourages energy efficiency, water efficiency and renewable energy measures for commercial, industrial, and multi-family, non-profit, and faith-based property owners." In 2021, the County approved a PACE Project in Saginaw Township Niche Poplar apartments at 4444 S. State Street. The property owners invested \$800,000 in high efficiency upgrades including, but not limited to, windows, boilers, hot water system. The project has a 24-year assessment to repay the investment.
7. **Enable Long-term County Vision and strategic plan.** The Board of Commissioners conducted a strategic planning session in March 2019 to develop its Board *Priorities* of Quality of Living, Accessible Services, and Revenue & Cost Control Efficiency. The County's vision... The County of Saginaw envisions a diverse community that empowers all people to celebrate life with pride along with the Board's *Priorities*, Goals and Objectives guide our investment in programs, services, and projects. This Vision and Board *Priorities* will be used to guide the Board of Commissioners in its allocation of the



American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 investments.

**EXPENDITURE GOAL:** Assess current expenditures to minimize costs while achieving quality, timely outcomes

- 1. Increase and fill key staff positions and implement alternative organizational structures across the County.** Countywide elected officials, department heads and personnel department work collaboratively to ensure adequate staffing, to evaluate restructuring opportunities and to deploy alternative staffing options (i.e. use of temporary employees). The Board of Commissioners should continue to discuss staff reassessment and realignment to ensure recent implementation of technology is leveraged when evaluating annual staffing requests.
- 2. Reorganize staff and compensation structures in County departments to remain efficient and competitive.** The County implemented in 2017 and 2021 its Job Classification & Total Compensation Study results, which is aligning its compensation to market value. Even considering these efforts, the County remains challenged in attracting and retaining fulltime, parttime and seasonal employees. Market wages have grown rapidly and, to some extent, to unsustainable levels.
- 3. Leverage Contract Service Providers when necessary.** The Health Department has partnered with CMU School of Medicine to contract for nurses and continue to provide an increase in services. Additionally, the County Health Department has received a grant from the State of Michigan for Health Resource Advocates, which are contracted employees. The County also contracts with retirees to assist with transitions, training, and increase in services. The County uses contract employees in its Medical Examiner's Office to provide the statutory services required.
- 4. Utilize partnerships and collaborations to achieve cost efficiencies.** The County excels in partnerships and collaborations. For example, the County recently partnered with the YMCA of Saginaw to provide enhanced services to area veterans. Commission on Aging has expanded its Foster Grandparents Program to Midland and Bay Counties to grow the program of providing grandparents in schools. The County has a partnership with CMU School of Medicine to provide a Medical Officer at the Health Department, which allows us to attract a more talented physician and increase the level of services provided.