

# OK Trail, former mayor says

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To the editor:

As Doug and I are on the road to our new adventure in California, I would like to express a big thank you to all for the welcome and support I've received during my almost 22 years on the Saugatuck City Council, including serving as Mayor. The well wishes I have received have been overwhelming!

It is so hard to say goodbye to all my colleagues and friends. Saugatuck has made its mark upon me and Palm Springs has big shoes to fill!

It has been a pleasure working with all of you on various issues over the years. We have accomplished a lot and I'm very proud of having been a part of making this a better place. As you know, I have always thought of us as one community. That's the way we function as we go about our daily lives. It's what we are.

My one regret as a council member has been the lack of cooperation with our neighbors on completing our section of the Blue Star Trail. From my front porch on Park Street, I observe on a daily basis a constant stream of people enjoying our city by walking, running and biking on a narrow street that was designed for automobiles.

I have also observed these same people trying to navigate north across the Blue Star Bridge on a bicycle pressed against the guardrail waiting to cross the highway at its narrowest point and finding that the bike lane has ended. I've seen it many times and it scares me to death!

Up to now I have been the sole supporter on the Saugatuck council of the trail completion through the city. I struggle to understand why. Everyone knows the benefits of pedestrian/bike trails for a community.

Have you seen the billboard on I- 196 near exit 34 that says "Cool City Outdoors Grand Rapids"? The Tri Community Master Plan prioritizes trails by laying out connected trails as future projects and nothing has been done. I ask myself why is this not a priority in a "Cool City" such as ours? I do believe it is a priority with our residents and visitors.

Why is it not a priority with the Saugatuck council?

The Friends of the Blue Star Trail have been diligent in working with the city and have taken the time to develop a plan for the city portion of the trail that addresses concerns we (myself included) have had regarding the design, future maintenance and prioritization with other city

projects. The latest plan put forth is of little or no cost to the city. Yet to date no action has taken place.

Please take a look at the designs, specifications and costs that are available on line at [fotbst.org](http://fotbst.org). If you believe as I do that non-motorized trails are of value, sign the petition and continue to write your letters of support and let your leaders know that the time to act is now!

I plan to return often and would like nothing better than to see this and other projects completed to make this a pedestrian and bike-friendly place!

You can do this!

Jeff Spangler

Saugatuck