

# City imposes another trail hurdle

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To the editor,

Saugatuck City Council voted unanimously last week to approve the request of City Manager Kirk Harrier to organize an invitation-only meeting of community leaders along the route of the Blue Star Trail.

Harrier indicated that the agenda would be set by “government officials,” which implies that Friends of the Blue Star Trail will not have a say in it even though the Friends organization is providing all local matching funds and engineering costs.

Harrier also noted that the meeting would be structured so would not have to be open to the public under the sunshine law. Tellingly, neither Harrier nor any council member explained why he or she needed input from other stakeholders in order to decide whether to approve a plan for the trail through the city.

Someone new to this saga might wonder what’s the matter with convening a meeting of stakeholders in the project. Indeed, the Friends have organized previous stakeholder meetings and, as we assured Mr. Harrier recently, plan to do so again when we are in a position to move ahead.

But it is just a waste of the time of all involved unless and until the city rejoins all the other stakeholders that have approved the trail. Due to Michigan Department of Transportation rules, no progress can be made on the trail until the City formally gives its support.

Our time and that of the city manager would be better spent working with the fire department and MDOT to address the council’s latest concerns regarding emergency vehicle access over the Blue Star Bridge.

Certain council members and commentators say they are in favor of trails, but actions speak louder than words. We can’t help but feel that for 21/2 years council has repeatedly moved the goalposts for winning its support.

Is this just the latest move to deflect responsibility for stalling the trail? You decide. It is not that complicated — the City should support a safe, attractive, cost-effective trail route alongside Blue Star Highway.

Your voice does matter. Please reach out to your community leaders, and/or join more than 1,700 residents, neighbors and visitors in signing our petition (available at [bluestartrail.org](http://bluestartrail.org)).

John Adams, President  
Friends of the Blue Star Trail