

Trail letter misleads, offends

The Commercial Record

January 23, 2020

To the editor,

We again feel that we owe it to the hundreds of Trail supporters and other members of our communities to respond to last week's letter regarding so-called "planning shortcomings" surrounding the Blue Star Trail.

First, in response to articles that reported that Saugatuck City Council allowed the \$200,000 pledge for the North Section of the Trail to expire at the end of last year, the letter author asserts that there actually was no pledge, calling it a "cagey ploy."

The only basis he offers for his claim is that "the anonymous party who made the pledge remained unnamed, unknown." Of course, that's what "anonymous" means, "a person not identified by name" according to one dictionary.

There are many good reasons why a major donor would prefer to remain anonymous, which is why pledges are made anonymously all the time. (Google "anonymous donation" for scores of articles on the topic.)

To accuse the Friends of the Blue Star Trail board of lying about the pledge is not only unfounded but offensive. Fellow members and I met with the donor several times and had no reservations about the validity of the pledge; this was no hoax.

If the letter author had asked us, we would have explained this to him. We are retired professionals giving our time and money to benefit the community, with no motive to lie. How do you expect residents to volunteer for government and non-profit positions when they are subjected to this kind of baseless defamation?

Next the author complains that the Friends engaged in "pressure tactics" and ignored "valid local concerns." This is rhetoric instead of evidence and logic. What tactics, what concerns?

By our count and that of the City's engineer, we have addressed more than 25 stated City Council concerns in a process that has dragged on for over 2 1/2 years. The Council obviously felt no pressure, since it has taken no action to address the

Trail route design since July and declined to step in to restore a scheduled meeting with the fire department or allow the City's engineer to continue work on the Trail.

In his parting shot, the author expresses gratitude that there will now be—implying that they were absent before — “multi-government cooperative planning and funding,” freedom from “outside group interference,” citizen input and “professional planning.”

It is absurd to suggest that the Friends have “interfered” with efforts to build the Trail; the Friends initiated and have sustained those efforts, not anyone else. For the last 10 years, we have worked closely with the various governments, citizens and engineering professionals. Just look at BlueStarTrail.org for the proof.

We are pleased that our efforts are now bringing the tri-communities together to help us address the existing safety concerns in the Blue Star Highway corridor.

We respect different opinions about the Trail that are well informed; we don't pretend to have all the answers. But irresponsible and defamatory statements in a public forum degrade the level of civic dialogue.

Given the author's position on Saugatuck's Planning Commission and the fire board, and as a staunch defender of the incumbent City Council members, we wish he would work constructively with us rather than just throwing stones from afar that serve only to create confusion and delay.

Finally, we also welcome the news that the Douglas City Council and manager are addressing issues with the trail that Douglas constructed. While the Friends were not consulted about the original design, we have offered our assistance regarding any remedial measures.

John Adams, President
Friends of the Blue Star Trail