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Hang 'em high

You can't get a much broader hammock view than from on top of the Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area dune. This group enjoyed Saturday's sunshine and warmth to set up this respite amid their hike. (Photo by Scott Sullivan)

'Crash Corner' roundabout build gets underway

BY SCOTT SULLIVAN
EDITOR

Work on a long-discussed roundabout at the Blue Star Highway-Old Allegan Road intersection was set to start Wednesday, April 10 and close traffic there through July 22.

The \$1.5-million traffic-safety project is funded through federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) grant and Michigan Department of Transportation Traffic Safety stipend, plus matching dollars from Saugatuck Township and the Allegan County Road Commission.

During construction, a Blue Star north-south detour will follow I-196 east of town.

The single-lane roundabout, covering 0.33 miles, is designed to optimize traffic movement efficiently and improve safety at the juncture.

Designed by LRE Engineers, it will include four road islands, two of which are extended, and a 45-foot-diameter center circle ornamented by Shawn Morin's "Canary in a Coal Mine" steel sculpture.

With 23 feet of the center circle consisting of a mountable apron, the roundabout is designed to accommodate the types and volume of vehicles that now frequent the crossing, including large trucks and emergency vehicles.

A rash of accidents there three years ago prompted the site being called "Crash Corner" and a 2021 traffic study that indicated need for improved safety measures there. It cited high seasonal traffic and plans to construct a non-motorized Blue Star Trail alongside the highway among reasons for such a move.

A roundabout was recommended based on such designs being recognized Proven Safety Countermeasures by the Federal Highway Administration for reducing speeds and conflicts, minimizing severe crashes and offering more crossing points for non-motorized traffic.

In addition to roundabout construction, the project will include installing a 500-foot section of

■ see **Roundabout**, Page A2

Hello-goodbye as Interurban changes guard

BY SCOTT SULLIVAN
EDITOR

Retiring Interurban head Phyllis Yff (as in "knife") will be feted Sunday, May 1, in the Saugatuck Center for the Arts from 4 to 7 p.m.

All are invited to a reception for the transit authority's 10-year director and veteran driver/dispatcher Becky Carten-Crandall, chosen to replace Yff.

It has been quite a ride for all.

The Interurban — offering low-cost, on-demand transportation throughout Saugatuck, Douglas and Saugatuck Township — started May 8, 1980 after late local government leader Phil Quade applied for and won a grant that covered all 2-year service costs. It was matched by \$333 each from the township and then two villages.

The start-up dispatched buses from a remodeled closet in Saugatuck's Village Hall. Director



Outgoing and incoming Interurban directors Phyllis Yff and Becky Carten-Crandall embody spring floral theme. (Photo by Scott Sullivan)

■ see **Interurban**, Page A3

Roundabout from Page A1

Blue Star Trail alongside the highway among reasons for such a move.

A roundabout was recommended based on such designs being recognized Proven Safety Countermeasures by the Federal Highway Administration for reducing speeds and conflicts, minimizing severe crashes and offering more crossing points for non-motorized traffic.

In addition to roundabout construction, the project will include installing a 500-foot section of the Blue Star Trail on the west side of the highway, plus a pedestrian crossing south of the intersection.

A concrete landing pad will be placed east of Blue Star in preparation for a future path connecting pedestrians to the township's River Bluff Park.

Concurrently, the township has partnered with Viridis Design Group of Grand Rapids on a landscape plan for the site.

"Our goal was to inte-

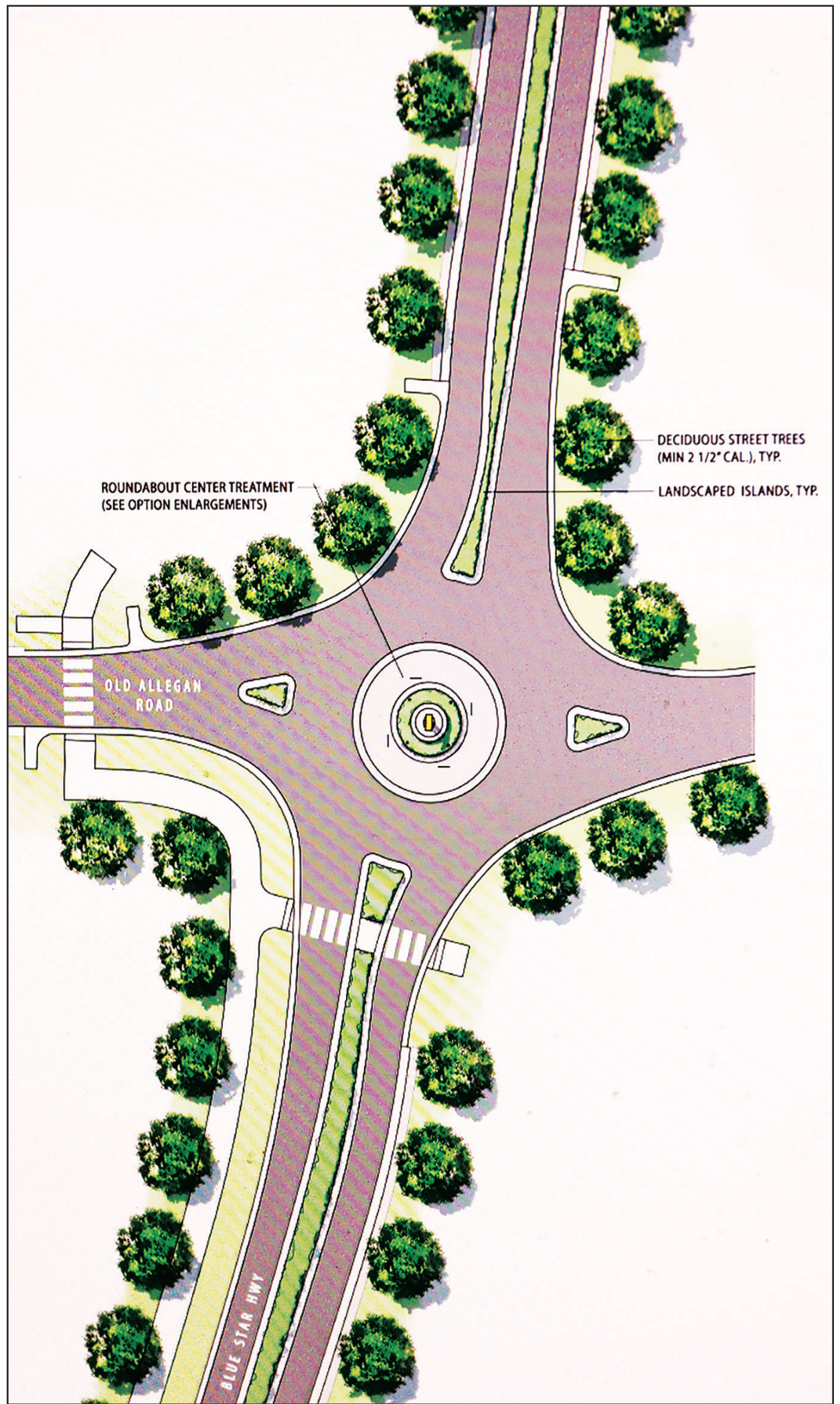
grate sustainable solutions into traditional infrastructure practices, seamlessly blending pedestrian and vehicular safety and circulation with the local ecology and artistic community," said Viridis landscape designer Lindsey Gadbois.

Features will include low-maintenance, drought-resistant plantings such as dune grass with hardscaping in the center of the road island.

"The roundabout, with its proximity to downtown Saugatuck and a growing Blue Star business corridor, presents an opportunity to create a welcoming gateway into the community," township manager Daniel DeFranco said.

"This is the first time the county road commission has partnered with a municipality on a landscape design for a road improvement project," he continued.

For more information, call the township at (269) 857-7721 or road commission at (269) 673-2184.



Balmer back on Douglas council

BY SCOTT SULLIVAN
EDITOR

Seems like old times in Douglas with Matt Balmer back on city council.

Balmer, the then-new city's first mayor from 2004 to 2010, was chosen by council April 1 to fill resigned member Fran Ray's unexpired term through November 2025.

The body's first vote ended in a 3-3 tie, with Everyday People Café owner Balmer and Demetrea Therrien, a retired nurse and Saugatuck-Douglas District Library trustee, splitting votes.

Mayor Cathy North, mayor pro-tem Randy Walker and councilman Greg Freeman favored Balmer, mentioning his experience as a key factor in the first ballot.

Council members Neal Seabert, John O'Malley and Jerry Donovan first voted

for Therrien, noting her frequent meeting attendance and service as city library representative.

After discussion, O'Malley backed Balmer on the second vote.

Also applying were Laura Peterson, who claims 18 years of county government experience and also interviewed before council prior to voting; and Terry Vuckovich, a retired sourcing and supply chain professional who was unable to attend.

Balmer didn't leave city service after stepping down from council. He now chairs the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority and serves on the planning commission. His wife, Aleshia Balmer, chairs the Downtown Development Authority.

"I hope I can draw on my background and institutional knowledge to help," he said.

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SOUTH HAVEN	FENNVILLE	NORTON SHORES	FENNVILLE	SAUGATUCK
7237 Pacific Ave 31-34 • \$180,000 Large building site in Miami Park 120 X 105. Build your summer cottage or year round residence. Enjoy the sunsets of Lake Michigan. Located just minutes from resort communities of South Haven or Saugatuck.	6561 122nd Avenue • \$795,000 Exquisite 5-acre estate with a meticulously renovated farmhouse dating back to the 1940s. The residence has undergone a comprehensive transformation, to its stunning rebuild, featuring an open floor plan and premium finishes throughout.	3479 Osceola Drive • \$269,000 This is a wonderful sprawling ranch. Enjoy the additional living area, natural lighting with the extra windows, and the wood burning fireplace. Newer flooring. Recently painted throughout and kitchen has new tile backsplash. Low maintenance brick exterior.	1745 66th Street • \$105,000 Partially wooded 3 acres at a perfect location to build your home. Located just 15 minutes away from South Haven and only 10 minutes from Douglas/Saugatuck area. Come and check it out!	VL N Parcel Riverside Dr • \$2,500,000 This vacant lot boasts an impressive 100 feet of prime water frontage on the serene Kalamazoo River, situated in Saugatuck Township. Featuring a sturdy steel seawall, this lot is well-protected, ensuring peace of mind for any prospective development.
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DOUGLAS	FENNVILLE	FENNVILLE SOLD	DOUGLAS	FENNVILLE
310 Blue Star Highway • \$2,395,000 Specialty market with outdoor entertaining space, along with two successful short-term rental units upstairs, all renovated and expanded in 2020. The sale price includes 3 liquor licenses and all business-related equipment.	5821 Lakeland Drive • \$463,000 HUTCHINS LAKE DEEDED ACCESS! Charming 3 bedroom home with beautifully preserved wood floors. Vaulted wood ceilings add another element of class and cozy atmosphere. Enjoy the extra large lot with storage/wood sheds and firepit.	6870 121st Avenue • \$231,000 Welcome to this large home with a country-like setting. Oversized rooms allow for family gatherings. Spacious primary bedroom has a 3 season room attached. And sitting on an acre of land you'll enjoy the outdoors in any season.	320 Blue Star Hwy 36 • \$424,000 Beautiful Condo TURNKEY with fantastic investment potential. 2 bed 2 bath with high end finishes and gas fireplace. Wonderful rental history and bookings already in place for the 2024 season. Highly sought after upper end unit gives privacy.	6017 124th Avenue • \$2,700,000 Once in a lifetime opportunity to own a true landmark in Fennville. The Gary Crane U-Pick Farm has been in the family for generations. 112 acres of apples, peaches, nectarines, raspberries, blue berries, sweet corn, pumpkins, gourds and flowers.
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