

Saugatuck Township Hall renovations will improve safety, customer service



Saugatuck Twp Hall Renovations: Saugatuck Township Hall, 3461 Blue Star Highway, will undergo major renovations starting in February.

Construction will begin next month on a \$765,000 renovation of the Saugatuck Township Hall, 3461 Blue Star Highway.

Updates are needed for structural, mechanical and electrical systems, including more professional work spaces for staff with improved safety, and expanded parking for visitors.

“The township is growing and demand on township services is greater than ever,” said Township Manager Daniel DeFranco. “The renovation prioritizes changes to the office that support staff in delivering the exceptional customer service that our community deserves.”

The board on Wednesday, Jan. 11, approved CarbonSix Construction of Grand Rapids for the project.

Work is expected to be complete in June.

Few upgrades

The township moved from its longtime location in Douglas into its current building in 1992, sharing the space with a dental business and a Michigan State Police office. The dentist has relocated and the police now occupy about 1,000 square feet of the entire 4,196 square-foot building.

Few upgrades or improvements have been made since 1992. The state police will remain in the building – the agency leases the space for \$1 a year – but their area will not see renovations from this project.

The township board began studying the needs of the building in 2021, hiring Abonmarche, an architectural and engineering firm with an office in South Haven.

“The assessment of the building conducted by Abonmarche highlighted many building needs resulting from deferred maintenance, ADA compliance issues, and general privacy, safety and security issues in need of being addressed,” DeFranco said.

Changes

The firm recommended replacing the building’s failing roof and installing new electrical and mechanical systems that have reached the end of their functional lifespans.

The public will see two major changes right away, DeFranco said.

First, the offices and board room will be renovated to improve functionality and privacy.

“The new conference room creates private space for people dealing with sensitive issues with township staff, whether it is a grieving family purchasing a cemetery plot from the sexton or a homeowner needing to work out a payment plan for property taxes,” DeFranco said.

Second, the plans change the main entrance from its current location on the southwest corner of the building facing Blue Star Highway to the southeast side facing Clearbrook Drive, adding an enclosed and secured vestibule where residents will enter and exit the hall.

“The new design contains a control point through which people have to pass to get into the office,” said DeFranco. “The current layout allows people to wander through the offices with no control point giving potential access to confidential and personal information that is stored throughout the office.”

This also increases election security.

“I am excited to have been part of the renovation planning process, ensuring that the new space is more efficient for future elections and will better serve the community,” Clerk Becky Israels said.

Funding

The \$765,000 project is funded by \$262,000 in American Rescue Plan Act money and the rest from a capital project fund.

“We’ve been saving for this,” Treasurer Jon Helmrich said.

Staff will remain in the building during the renovations, but the regularly scheduled meetings of the township board, planning commission and parks commission will be at Saugatuck High School, 401 Elizabeth St.