

Port Huron's protests about plaza come too little, too late

Are you already tired of all of the Blue Water Bridge Plaza talk? Me, too, but it has only just begun.

The feds and the state are only beginning to play with your local elected leadership until they fold their tents. You had better hope the people you voted into office are up to the job. If not, you lose ... and lose big.

Port Huron Mayor Alan Cutcher and the City Council are way behind the curve - but, it's not as if they didn't have plenty of warning. About a year and a half ago, St. Clair County Administrator Shaun Groden, then new to our community, started throwing up red flags warning us the plaza project would have a very negative impact here in River City. Shaun again did a great job laying out the plaza issues at the Chamber of Commerce luncheon several weeks ago

He talked of how the impact would be much bigger than just the plaza footprint. For example, traffic counts on Pine Grove, north of the bridge, would drop from 27,000 a day to 700 a day. Good luck, Tim Hortons, Smith Family Funeral Home, Citizens First and all of those businesses in the Grove Mall and Colonial Shopping Center.

If City Council members had a clue, they sure kept it to themselves. Now we must play catch-up, and, to be honest, it's too little too late.

First, the plaza expansion would cut Port Huron in half. It appears the feds and the state decided this is going to happen, and it does not matter what you think or how much damage it does to the city.

It looks to me as if the Michigan Department of Transportation is going to have its way. Doesn't it appear as if the agency, to some degree, is going to do both the Port Huron and a large part of the Port Huron Township plan?

Second, there's the mitigation of financial damage to the city. Don't expect much.

The state does a lot of highway construction, and it almost always does harm to someone and the community.

The state cannot afford to open that "We will make you whole" door for any community or it will forever have to pay every community. Expect nothing or very little here.

Third, there's the environmental damage. Here is the real kicker. With tens

of thousands of trucks and cars spewing a blanket of pollution and carcinogens over the city every day, there is almost nothing the state can do to limit the damage to your property and your children.

By the way, where is the St. Clair County Health Department?

Their leaders live in fear you will get a whiff of cigarette smoke but not one word of warning from them of the health impact on our community from the plaza.

Aren't they supposed to be looking out for your health? Apparently not when it matters.

The City Council has to play hardball now. Letters are pretty much meaningless. It will take face-to-face encounters with the governor, sooner rather than later. If she ducks us, then load up a caravan of buses and show up at her office door.

We also should file a suit now in federal court to show them we will defend ourselves against this destruction of our city, our way of life, the health of our children.