

How do small town citizens get things done?

About 1971 citizens interested in parks found out that the highway department had a leftover 27-acre piece of riverfront. They met and asked the township board to set up a township park commission. The board acquiesced on the condition that seven members of the group agree to accept appointment to the first park commission. The newly-minted body applied for a grant to cover the design of River Bluff Park, and got a one-year millage on the ballot to cover the matching funds. They also built two other small parks and used federal revenue sharing funds to hire a caretaker and a recreation director.



A view of the Kalamazoo River at River Bluff Park.

Saugatuck Township Park Commissioner was the first political office held by Patty Birkholz, of Saugatuck Township, who, later served in the state legislature for the maximum time allowable and, as a state senator she was the first woman elected president pro-tem of the Michigan Senate.



Patty Birkholz participating in a ribbon cutting for a new recycling station when she was Saugatuck Township Treasurer. After serving the maximum term allowable in the Michigan Legislature she was named director of the Office of the Great Lakes in January of 2011. At right is township official Frank Pluto.