

Saugatuck Township Special Board Meeting
Tuesday January 8, 2019, 1:30pm
Saugatuck Township Hall, 3461 Blue Star Highway, Saugatuck, MI 49453
Approved Minutes

Supervisor Roerig called the meeting to order at 1:30pm

All board members present with the exception on William Wester (Clerk)

Public Comment

Jim Hansen- 2907 63rd Street. Would like question for applicant to cover experience with litigation. Also a question to cover collaboration with neighboring municipalities. Saugatuck Township is unusual.

Roy McIlwaine – 3466 Riverside Drive. Understands the importance of hiring a manager/zoning admin in a timely manner. However believes that special meetings should be held in the evening so more people can attend to increase transparency. Asks trustees to consider a longer notice period for special meetings.

Maggie Conklin – 3485 65th Street. Also concerned about the short notice of the special meeting. Would like to be considered for the clerk’s position. Would like for the clerk’s position to be opened up to applicants. Believes there are many good applicants.

New Business

Interview Township Manager/Zoning Administrator applicant

Trustees introduced themselves

Natalie Dean began by introducing herself and by telling about herself. Spoke about her experience with the city of Marshall. Went to college and graduated from Spring Arbor. Undergrad in IT. First job was rewire/start database/develop inventory system in a bridal shop. Did that for one yr. Moved on to the city of Marshall as Admin. Assistant to Planning. After approx. 1 year took over planning and zoning position. Took many classes and learned as she went. Several years later she took on the director of community service; still ran the planning and zoning. Started a code enforcement unit at that time and was head of that. Headed the recreation, dial a ride and a senior living complex. Supervised budgets and worked on big picture goals. Also took on the assistant city manager position. Was in Marshall for approx. 13 years. Moved and also was not seeing eye to eye with some of the other directors. Left Marshall and was hired on with Whiteman as a municipal planner. Loves the role, but misses seeing projects through. Really wants to be in one community.

Roerig – What attracted you to Saugatuck Township? She is attracted to the Saugatuck area. She is a sails with her husband. The zoning/manager position really fits well for her.

Roerig – How do you see yourself in that combined role? Dean- reports that she would do what needs to be done. In a small municipality you need to perform many roles. In Marshall served as a liaison between new developers and processes in the City. She took a real hands on approach with this. Thinks this is something that would work well for Saugatuck Township.

Roerig – Tech? do you know Microsoft/excel? Dean – Yes on Microsoft products. Also knows adobe design, BSNA and GIS.

Bigford – Please talk about applying new technology in a past position. Dean – BSNA, Planning Commission should look at what the zoning board of appeals has done to get the real picture. Really relied on reports from BSNA and reviewing reports annually.

Aldrich- Experience working with building officials, fire code officials, and inspectors? Dean – Lots of experience as head of building dept and planner. Had to set up systems for different individuals. Made sure site plans aligned with zoning. Inspected properties to compare to site plans upon completion. Helmrich – Unique situation in Saugatuck Township. Please speak to collaboration with neighboring communities. Dean- Marshall created a PA425 land transfer agreement. Creation of joint planning commission between the township and city (in Marshall). Co-ran the joint commission. Taught her about how the township and the city did things very differently and meeting in the middle and working together.

Roerig – talk about your legal background and experience with litigation around land use. Dean – Worked closely with the City attorney in Marshall. She enjoys the research. Talked about a code enforcement case in Marshall. It went to court for 3 years. That was her only litigation experience. Lots of controversy, but none went to court. In regard to code enforcement, believes that regular communication and support with resources is more effective than simply enforcing codes/going to court.

Bigford – talk about identifying and setting long range objectives. Dean- that's what I help communities do now. Accomplishes this through lots of public engagement, then narrows it down to the most implementable goals, then creates a plan. In Marshall implemented lots of goals. Marshall is a very lovely/historical downtown. Electric/mechanical was very out of whack. She became very concerned about this as it is a huge fire hazard to multiple buildings. Started working with the planning commission on requirements for ordinance. MSHDA was offering rental rehab loans and grants. When the plumbing and electric was updated on the upper floors of the historic buildings, they would do the lower half as well. Added to safety.

Aldrich – what do you expect to accomplish in 30, 60 and 90 days? Dean – First 30 days – will not come in with agenda. Will listen and find out the major issues. Use that time to meet people and get to know individuals. From that point on will work from a point of public engagement.

Helmrich – Diverse economically and geographically. Have you been exposed to that kind of diversity through Whiteman? Dean – Many communities are diverse. Most communities she works with do have a downtown. Has never worked for a township. Mild experience with conservation groups. Has not worked for a lakeshore community. Would need to start from the beginning. Really likes learning until she is an expert

Roerig – speak to experience with staff management/budget/grant writing/water and sewer/parks and recreation. Dean – 13 years of budget work. Formulated budgets for her 5 departments. Believes the township budget is pretty straight forward. Would be interested in talking about 5 year outlook to be added to budget. Water/sewer/roads – Has been involved in many electric issues. As a planner, dealt with many road issues.

Bigford – How would people that you work with describe you? Dean – people would describe her as authentic. She likes to be funny and to laugh. She thinks people would describe her as busy. She tends to hyper focus on her current project. Is working on being flexible with “switching gears”. She likes people and has no enemies.

Helmrich – Does Marshall have cemeteries/sexton? Dean – one cemetery. Sexton was a role that has bounced around. Maps for cemeteries were hand drawn. No direct involvement. Did help a little with the data base

Roerig - how did you handle complaints with ordinances without getting legal counsel involved? Dean – Believes that complaints deserve attention. Sees herself in a mediator role and problem solving to reach an agreeable compromise. Issues tend to get solved when she can get 2 parties together to problem solve.

Helmrich – what is your potential time frame to begin with the township? Dean – at least 2 weeks. She is thinking 2-4 weeks

Roerig – are you seeking contract or just employee work? Dean – not sure. Open to options
Roerig – please describe a past project that you are proud of. Dean- There is a hospital in a historic neighborhood in Marshall. The hospital grew. There were problems between the residents of the neighborhood and the hospital. Neighborhood associations were formed to oppose growth of the Hospital. The hospital's point was "we either grow or die". As the contentions grew, she noticed, as the planner that this problem needed attention. Formed a study committee that was part neighborhood, part counsel, part hospital and part planning commission. Over 3 years battled over and worked hard on an overlay district for the hospital. Most contentious issue she has ever dealt with. In the end an overlay district was formed and is working well. Thinks it is her greatest accomplishment.

Helmrich – analysis on township office. Thoughts on this? Dean – Marshall went through several feasibility studies. Sometimes they are hard to hear. She is glad we are discussing it. It will help to set goals. Does not support paying money to do a study and then do nothing with the results. You must be prepared to change/implement things. Does not work well when people do not collaborate. Could help with strategic planning, not feasibility studies.

Bigford – do you have questions for us or other competencies to share? Dean - #1 strength is intrapersonal skills. Likes to hear feedback on how she is doing and what areas she may need to improve on. Desires regular reviews. How do you measure success in a manager? Roerig – someone who needs little direction. All annual goals and objectives are met. Bigford – Happy, engaged, informed constituents. Seen as someone who is a liaison and can support and bring people together. Aldrich – Assessing old expectations and bringing in new expectations. Hopefully the manager could be a guide in this area. Policies need to be reviewed/updated. Helmrich – In 6 mo hearing praise from constituents and neighboring cities.

Dean – how do you feel about continuing education? Roerig – it's essential. There is a tremendous growth opportunity for you in this position. Supports it 100%

Helmrich – we recently rejoined the MTA and 2 trustees have already gone for training. The annual conference is in Grand Rapids. He supports participation. Dean- not all training is at a cost. Many opportunities are free. Dean – how do you feel about economic development? Helmrich – the treasurer should be involved with the manager in economic development. We need an economic development plan. There is so much opportunity. Dean – has a strong interest in economic development.

Roerig – do you have concerns about the commute? Dean- no concerns. Does have potential plans to purchase a home in the Saugatuck area.

Roerig – believes we should move forward with this process. Our attorney Ron Bultje could work out an arrangement with Dean. Individually we (trustees) would work with the attorney to craft an agreeable agreement. We should complete reference checks and interview questionnaire. Very impressed with Dean.

Roerig moved to authorize the supervisor and attorney to advance the hiring process of Natalie Dean. To include checking references and developing a draft agreement to be approved by this board in a public meeting. Supported by Aldrich. Role call vote, all yes. Motion passes 4-0.

Roerig declared the meeting adjourned at 2:50pm

Recording Secretary: Abby Bigford
Saugatuck Township Trustee
January 14, 2019