

Saugatuck Township Special Board Meeting
Wednesday January 23, 2019, 6:00pm
Saugatuck Township Hall, 3461 Blue Star Highway, Saugatuck, MI 49453
Approved Minutes

Supervisor Roerig called the meeting to order at 6:00pm

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Public Comment

Maggie Conklin – 2 things. The new Board has accomplished many things in a short amount of time. Good job on that. Disappointed that she sees in the agenda that there is discussion on the appointment of Abby Bigford for Clerk. She believes all applicants should be considered and that the most experienced and educated person should be chosen.

Roy McIlwaine- there is an existing township policy regarding appointments to boards, commissions and committees. Believes the policy should be followed and that all applicants should be considered and interviewed. He believes there is no rush and that policy should be followed. Also thinks there was a shoddy bidding process for the security camera. Believes there were no written specs. Thinks that this is a potentially illegal process and is concerned that the person chosen to install the camera is the spouse of one of the individuals who headed the recall. Encouraged board members to brush up on the specifics of the open meetings act.

New Business

Clerk Bill Wester’s resignation effective 2/1/19

Roerig- Wester submitted his letter of resignation effective 2/1/19. The Township has 45 days to fill that position or the Governor will appoint someone. We would be without a Clerk, and checks could not be signed until another Clerk was appointed. *Helmrich moved to accept the written resignation submitted by Clerk Bill Wester effective 2/1/19. Aldrich supported. Discussion: none. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passes 4-0.*

A discussion and decision regarding the appointment of Abby Bigford to the Clerk position

Roerig- Spoke with attorney Ron Bultje. The process is legal. Bigford should be sworn in on February 1st. No special meeting needed. Believes there is a conflict of interest and Bigford should not vote for herself. Helmrich – I have contacted the MTA. Bigford can vote for herself. Wester could not vote on his replacement, but Bigford is permitted to do so. Aldrich – also contacted the MTA independently and has the same information as Helmrich. Roerig- statement from Ron Bultje – Bigford should abstain from voting for herself. Aldrich- Bigford was elected. She has been at the office doing Clerk duties, she would retain Babinski, she already has a feel for the Clerk’s duties and has a good working relationship with Babinski. Bigford deserves this. She was elected by the people. The Trustee position should then be opened up. Helmrich - 4 people were elected by a good margin. We should choose someone who was elected by a significant margin. Roerig – advice from Ron Bultje: Abby voting for herself would constitute her voting for a promotion/payraise for herself. Conflict of interest. *Aldrich moved to appoint Abby Bigford as Township Clerk starting February 1st. Supported by Helmrich. Discussion: Roerig- Abby is qualified and it will be good for the office. Abby will be a good help for Babinski. Does believe that we need to follow the policy. Will be voting no. Helmrich – read some Michigan*

Consolidated Law and some Michigan Township Association language around filling Township Board vacancies. The Board may appoint someone 30 days before the date of the resignation. The appointment is official when the resignation takes effect. Deputy issue: must have a Clerk/deputy and a Treasurer to sign checks. The township board can appoint anyone who is eligible to hold elective office. The board is not required to advertise the vacancy, but doing so may attract a larger pool. All interviews conducted by the township board, and any actions taken by the board to "shorten the list" of candidates, must be done in open session at a public board meeting. May another township board member be appointed to fill a vacancy in another board office? Yes. May a township board member vote to appoint him or herself to another board office vacancy? Yes. The resigning official should not vote on the appointment. Roll call vote. Helmrich, Bigford, Aldrich vote yes. Roerig votes no. Motion passes 3-1

A discussion and decision regarding the resignation of Abby Bigford from the Trustee position, if necessary

Roerig- Effective February 1st the Trustee position would be open. Helmrich – we are open to hearing from applicants for the Trustee position. Would like to expedite this process. Would like to vote on this as early as February 6. Roerig- Are you ignoring the policy? Helmrich – questioning if this policy is up to date/applicable. Roerig – read some of the appointment policy. *Bigford moved that the board accept her resignation from township board trustee effective February 1st. Aldrich supported. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passes 4-0.*

A discussion and decision regarding the appointment of Abby Bigford's replacement as Trustee

Roerig- we should open this up. We should go through applications on file. We should advertise.

Natalie Dean employment

Roerig – posted an advertisement on MML for open ZA/Manager position. Received very high level applicants. Natalie Dean was one of those applicants. The board interviewed her on January 8. Submitted an offer to Natalie Dean which was accepted January 16. *Roerig moved to accept the signed agreement for the employment of Natalie Dean and authorize the supervisor to sign it on behalf of the Saugatuck Township Board with the intent that the new Manager and Zoning Administrator is to begin duties starting February 4. Discussion: None. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passes 4-0.*

Master meter update

Roerig- he and Aldrich participated in a meeting at Kal/Lake recently. This project has been in the works for some time with the municipalities. This will provide empirical evidence regarding capacity at the treatment facility. Reviewed project with township attorney, township engineer, Kal/Lake director/board. Can recommend that the township accepts the resolution. Has reviewed the costs and contingencies. This is not a discretionary project it has to be done at some point. It will become more expensive as time goes on. We have most of the funds in our sewer fund. The remainder can come from the general fund. We are facing capacity issues that need to be faced with empirical data. Contingency costs, had initially objected to it, but agrees due to unknown costs. Approve resolution only if the other municipalities go forward as well. *Roerig moved to adopt the resolution to approve participation in and cost sharing for the master meter project. Supported by Aldrich. Discussion: Aldrich- the cost is only going to go up and we have the funds. Helmrich – extended thanks to Supervisor Roerig for stepping up as the temporary representative on the Kal/Lake board and for his work on this. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Resolution adopted 4-0.*

Public Comments

Jim Hansen- Supervisor is the legal liaison. Shocked that Bigford did not follow this advice. As a former trustee, you can get into trouble even when you follow legal advice. You need to follow policy for appointments. If it is not a good policy, you need to change it. Helmrich: there should not be dueling legal opinions. You need to follow the legal advice from the township attorney from the supervisor.

Brenda Marcy- Natalie Dean is an awesome candidate. She is going to help tremendously. Believes the board needs to figure out what supersedes what? The MTA or the township attorney? It seems like the township attorney is in opposition with the MTA. Maybe the township board needs to look into a new attorney that is well versed in Michigan law or figure out what supersedes what. MTA is a phenomenal organization. Policy is designed as a guide. Believes that law supersedes policy/guidelines.

Roy McIlwaine – can't believe that Bigford was appointed. Policy was not followed.

Tammy Jacobi – was here for the interview with Dean. Thinks she is awesome.

Adjourn – meeting adjourned by Roerig. No time noted. Time elapsed on voice recording 42 min.

Recording Secretary: Abby Bigford
Saugatuck Township Trustee
January 31, 2019