



**Saugatuck Township  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, September 13, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.  
Saugatuck Township Hall  
Meeting held in person & via Zoom**

**Call to Order:** Supervisor Bigford called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

**Roll Call:**

Present: Supervisor Bigford, Clerk Israels, Treasurer Helmrich, Trustee Aldrich, and Trustee Marcy.

Absent:

Also Present: Township Manager Daniel DeFranco, Recording Secretary Morgan Arens, Lindsey Gadbois, Maryjo Lemanski, Steve Mottram.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Approval of Agenda:**

Supervisor Bigford introduced the agenda.

A **Motion** was made by Marcy to approve the agenda as amended. Supported by Aldrich.

Discussion: None

Voice Vote: 5-0.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

**Public Comment:**

1. Chris Machiela – from the Allegan County Drain Commission office and introduced himself to the Board.

**Public Comment Closed**

**Approval of Consent Agenda:** Bigford introduced the consent agenda.

A **Motion** was made by Israels to approve the consent agenda as presented. Supported by Marcy.

Discussion: None

Voice Vote: 5-0.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

**Presentations:** None.

**New Business:**

**1. Library Board Appointments**

The Township has one (1) appointment to make to the Saugatuck-Douglas District Library Board of Trustees. Two representatives from each constituent municipality serve on the Library Board of Trustees for four-year terms. The term for Mark Chancey, who currently serves on the Library Board, will expire on September 30th. The Township has received one application to fill the vacancy on the Library Board from Jack Ridl.

The Board thanked Mark Chancey for his 8 years of service on the Library Board, during which the Library was successful in a bond proposal and successfully completed the construction of a new library facility.

Helmrich asked if Ridl was invited to the Board Meeting, to which DeFranco replied that he had been invited but it was some time ago.

Aldrich asked if it was required to be present for appointments, and Helmrich stated that it should be

because prior appointments were required to be present.

Marcy brought up possibly making it required for applicants to attend the Board meeting for their appointment, and DeFranco agreed.

Aldrich urged everyone to remember that everyone can apply and the Board appoints those to their respective boards, and Helmrich agreed.

A **Motion** was made by Marcy to approve the appointment of Jack Ridl as Saugatuck Township representative to the Saugatuck-Douglas District Library Board of Trustees for a four-year term to expire on September 30, 2027. There was no support and the motion died.

Aldrich stated that Chancey should be given the opportunity to apply, and Helmrich stated that traditions and protocols need to be followed for appointments.

Israels expressed desire to talk to Ridl, Chancey, and the Library Director in regard to appointments and requirements.

Bigford questioned and pondered the roles of the Township Board and Library Board and how they should fit together.

After thorough deliberation and discussion, the Board agreed that processes for appointments need to be reviewed.

A **Motion** was made by Helmrich to table the appointment of a Saugatuck Township representative to the Saugatuck-Douglas District Library Board of Trustees. Supported by Aldrich.

Discussion: None.

Voice Vote: 4-1

Motion Carried 4-1.

## **2. River Bluff Shoreline Restoration Feasibility Study Bid Award**

Saugatuck Township received five proposals in response to its RFQ to complete a feasibility study for shoreline restoration and expansion of recreational opportunities at River Bluff Park. All proposals received that cited a project cost came in at approximately \$48,000. The proposal from GEI had stood out for its relevant experience with similar projects in the Great Lakes region and Kalamazoo River watershed, inclusion of wetland delineation with GIS mapping in the scope of work, demonstrated familiarity with River Bluff Park, and ability to administer future project phases.

In support of the study, Saugatuck Township was awarded \$55,500 by the Natural Resource Trustees for the Kalamazoo River. The project had been one of 14 projects identified as a priority for restoring the ecology, public use, and enjoyment of the Kalamazoo River. The funding award had covered 100% of the cost of the feasibility study.

Israels asked who reviewed the proposals, and DeFranco explained that the Township Engineer Dana Burd and the Township representative from NOAA.

Helmrich asked where the funding would be coming from, to which DeFranco explained that the project is 100% grant funded.

A **Motion** was made by Marcy to award the River Bluff Park Shoreline Restoration Feasibility Study project to GEI Consultants for \$48,000. Supported by Helmrich.

Discussion: None.

Voice Vote: 5-0

Motion Carried Unanimously.

## **3. Property Tax Appeal Defense**

Watermark Properties, owners of the Ravines Golf Course, has filed a property tax appeal against Saugatuck Township with the State Tax Tribunal. The Township Assessor finds that there is adequate data to support the current assessed value of the property and recommends the Township seek legal

representation to defend the property tax appeal. Hallahan & Associates, P.C., a firm specializing in representing municipalities in property tax appeals, was contacted and has provided the Township an engagement letter.

Township Assessor Tony Meyaard explained the appeal.

Helmrich inquired about the potential timeline for the appeal, and Meyaard clarified that it could either be resolved swiftly or extend over a span of several months to potentially a year.

Helmrich asked if the Township would owe the property owner money in back taxes if the property owner won the appeal, to which Meyaard explained that the Township would owe money from the 2023 taxes.

A **Motion** was made by Israels to engage Hallahan & Associates, P.C. as legal representation for Saugatuck Township to defend the property tax appeal by *Watermark Properties v Saugatuck Township*. Supported by Aldrich.

Discussion: None

Roll Call Vote:

Yes: Bigford, Israels, Helmrich, Aldrich, Marcy

No:

Motion Carried Unanimously.

#### **4. Roundabout Design (Discussion)**

The Township Board accepted a proposal from Viridis Design Group to complete a landscape design for the new roundabout at Blue Star Highway and Old Allegan Road. Lindsey Gadbois with Viridis will be presenting design concepts and collecting feedback to inform a draft landscape plan.

The Board shared a collective enthusiasm for native plantings, brick pavers, the inclusion of beach grass, and exploring opportunities for art and sculptural signage.

#### **5. Public Art Acquisition**

Saugatuck Township has been approached by the Saugatuck Douglas Fennville Arts Initiative to acquire a sculpture entitled "Canary in a Coal Mine" by artist Shawn Phillip Morin.

Morin is offering the Township the piece at a highly reduced cost of \$4,500. To help offset the cost to the Township, the Convention and Visitor's Bureau is willing to contribute \$2,750 and Nick Cappelletti has generously donated \$1,000. The CVB would assist in marketing the dedication of the sculpture. With the CVB and Cappelletti contributions, the cost to the Township for acquiring the sculpture would be \$750. Note that this does not include the cost of a pad, base, dedication plaque or lighting. The need and cost of these items will depend on where the sculpture is located.

Aldrich inquired about the possibility of making alterations to the art, to which Steve Mottram responded that it could be done if the artist granted permission. Mottram went on to provide details about the cost of the piece and explained any additional expenses associated with it. He also shared the dimensions of the artwork and then invited Maryjo Lemanski to provide insights about the artist and the artwork.

Lemanski elaborated on the interpretation of the artwork and its connection to the piece titled "Canary in a Coal Mine." She also offered background information about the artist and the artwork. The Board expressed their gratitude to Lemanski for her insightful explanations.

Helmrich noted that the Township did not currently own any public art. Israels echoed Helmrich's sentiment, emphasizing that the Township is part of the Art Coast and should reflect that identity.

Aldrich and Bigford shared their appreciation for the piece while also raising concerns about its boldness and its proposed placement.

A **Motion** was made by Helmrich to approve the acquisition of “Canary in a Coal Mine” from Shawn Phillip Morin for inclusion in the Saugatuck Township Public Art Collection at a cost of \$4,500. Supported by Marcy.

Discussion: Alrich asked if it would be possible to see a mock up prior to purchase, with Lemanski stating that it could be done.

Voice Vote: 3-2.

Motion Carried 3-2.

## 6. Public Art Donation Campaign

The Township does not have a Public Art Collection. Given the renovation of the building and available space for art, staff believe the Township should look for opportunities to acquire public art and consider adopting a public art policy.

Staff have identified a piece by local artist, Ladislav Hanka, entitled “Kalamazoo River Song Line,” that we believe will be an appropriate piece to acquire for the Township Hall. The piece depicts the Kalamazoo River from Jackson through Saugatuck with illustrations of native species. The cost of the piece is \$8,000.

For acquisition of “Kalamazoo River Song Line,” staff recommend the Board authorize a donation campaign. To initiate the campaign, staff suggest that the Board consider making a personal donation of \$250 each as a Trustee gift commemorating the renovation of the Township Hall. Staff will work to organize a donation campaign to fund the remaining cost of the piece. The artist has agreed to loan the Township the piece while the donation campaign is ongoing.

Helmrich inquired about the pricing details and its inclusions.

Bigford sought clarification regarding the specifics of the Donation Campaign and its future direction, prompting DeFranco to elaborate on a potential plan that involves establishing an Art Acquisition Committee.

Israels raised questions about the logistics of the campaign and the composition of the committee. DeFranco responded by stating that the committee would consist of both experts and Township residents.

A **Motion** was made by Helmrich to pursue the establishing of an Art Acquisition Committee and process guidelines for the Township, including works such as “Kalamazoo River Song Line” and prioritizing donation collection. Supported by Israels.

Discussion: None.

Voice Vote: 5-0.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

## 7. Lakeshore Drive Managed Retreat Design Input

The Allegan County Road Commission has initiated phase two of the Lakeshore Drive Managed Retreat project, the scope of which includes developing preliminary design drawings for a new road that will service the Lake Shore Drive community. As part of this process, the Road Commission has requested input from the Township on road design.

- Staff recommends the Board consider requesting a separated non-motorized trail be included in the road design.
- Staff also recommends requesting the below items also be included in the road design:
  1. The new road be designed as a local road with slower speeds and traffic calming measures, balancing the use of access and the area’s current residential and natural character.
  2. Prioritize convenience for existing homesites to connect to new road.
  3. Preserve as much mature tree growth as possible.

The Township is not making any financial commitment at this time by requesting a separated non-motorized path be included in the Lakeshore Drive road design. As we work through this project, the Township will be exploring relevant grant programs. A request to add a non-motorized path to the road design cannot be made at a later time, as the preliminary road design will dictate the size and number of easements required for construction.

Helmrich inquired whether Township Engineer Dana Burd and Township Planning and Zoning Administrator Lynee Wells were content with the motion. In response, DeFranco confirmed that they were indeed satisfied, noting their active participation in the project discussions.

A **Motion** was made by Marcy to recommend that the Allegan County Road Commission include the following items in the design of a future Lakeshore Drive: (1) add a separated, non-motorized path with greenspace in between the path and road, (2) design a local road for slower speeds that include traffic calming measures, (3) prioritize convenient connections between new road and existing homesites, and (4) maximize preservation of mature tree growth with road route. Supported by Israels.

Discussion: None.

Voice Vote: 5-0.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

## **8. Sustainability Ad Hoc Committee**

To keep our sustainability efforts moving forward, staff recommend establishing a three-to-five member ad hoc Sustainability Committee that will be active for a period of 12 months and will be tasked with developing a Multi-Year Sustainability Plan for the Township. The Outdoor Discovery Center will play a supporting role in this process.

Staff requests Board authorization to initiate the process of creating a Sustainability Ad Hoc Committee, which will include advertising for potential committee members and developing a resolution outlining the parameters for the ad hoc committee. Staff plans to present candidates and a resolution establishing Sustainability Ad Hoc Committee for Board consideration at the October or November regular Board meeting.

The Board asked for a “road map” or plan of action for the Ad Hoc Committee, and DeFranco stated that he would get that to them with the creation of the committee.

A **Motion** was made by Marcy to authorize Township Staff to initiate the process of creating an ad hoc Sustainability Committee to be active for a period of 12-months and tasked with creating a multi-year Sustainability Plan. Supported by Helmrich.

Discussion: None.

Voice Vote: 5-0.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

## **9. Administrative Support Wage Adjustment**

Township Administrative Support, Morgan Arens, recently celebrated her one-year anniversary with the Township. In the capacity of her supervisor, DeFranco observed Arens assuming additional responsibilities, responding well to constructive feedback, and receiving positive feedback regarding her performance from other staff members. Recently, during a one-year performance evaluation meeting between DeFranco and Arens, they agreed upon specific performance goals to be achieved over the next 12 months.

DeFranco recommends that the Board consider approving an increase to Arens’ current compensation to \$24 per hour. Currently, Arens’ compensation is set at \$22.60. The proposed increase in compensation had been accounted for in the development of the FY 2023-2024 Budget.

Israels conveyed gratitude to Arens for her daily support.

Bigford concurred with Israels and recognized Arens's consistent positivity.

Helmrich chimed in, expressing appreciation for Arens's sense of humor and how it added a lively atmosphere to the office.

A **Motion** was made by Israels to approve a compensation increase to \$24 per hour for Morgan Arens, Administrative Support. Supported by Marcy.

Discussion: None.

Voice Vote: 5-0.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

#### **10. Website Change Order**

The Township has received a change order request from Insight Marketing Design for work on the Township's new website. The change order is in the amount of \$5,000 and is the first change order submitted by Insight. Staff do not anticipate any additional change orders as the new website is nearly ready to launch. Reasons for the change order request include (1) extended time needed to complete the site and (2) work completed beyond the original work scope. From Staff perspective, development of the site was more involved than anticipated, and much time has been spent designing the site to function as a community resource. Even with incurring the cost of the change order, project cost is below what was allocated for the project in the FY 23'-24' Budget.

A **Motion** was made by Marcy to approve Change Order 1 from Insight Marketing Design in the amount of \$5,000 for the development of the new Township Website. Supported by Israels.

Discussion: None.

Voice Vote: 5-0.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

#### **11. Grave Repurchase**

Cemetery Sexton, Lori Babinski, received a request from Mr. Bruce Troutman for the Township to repurchase two grave plots he presently owns in the Riverside Cemetery. When the Township has received similar requests, the Township has repurchased plots at current plot rates. In this case, the Township could offer to repurchase the plots for \$120 per plot. Mr. Troutman has provided documentation demonstrating that he is the owner of the plots in question. To complete the transaction, the Township will also require that Mr. Troutman sign an agreement that, upon payment, the Township becomes the legal owners of the plots in question. The Township should consider Mr. Troutman's request for the Township to repurchase two plots in the Riverside Cemetery at a total cost of \$240.00. The Board deliberated the possibility of handling this matter at an administrative level and reached a consensus that it was indeed feasible.

A **Motion** was made by Israels to move the repurchase of cemetery plots to administrative staff. Supported by Marcy.

Discussion: None.

Voice Vote: 5-0.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

**Old Business:** None.

**Reports:** Supervisor Bigford opened the floor for reports.

##### **Treasurer's Report**

Helmrich gave an update on the Township finances; the report is on file.

**Planning Commission**

Helmrich gave an overview of the Planning Commission reviewing the first 5 articles on the Draft Zoning Ordinance.

**Manager's Report**

Township Manager DeFranco gave an update on the Township projects; the report is on file.

**Open Board Report:**

- Helmrich: invited the Board to participate in the Allegan County Rotary minigolf tournament.
- Israels: gave an election update regarding early voting.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Adjournment:** Supervisor Bigford adjourned the meeting at 9:34 PM

**Meeting Adjourned.**

## MOTIONS

1. A **Motion** was made by Marcy to approve the agenda as amended. Supported by Aldrich.  
Discussion: None  
Voice Vote: 5-0.  
Motion Carried Unanimously.
2. A **Motion** was made by Israels to approve the consent agenda as presented. Supported by Marcy.  
Discussion: None  
Voice Vote: 5-0.  
Motion Carried Unanimously.
3. A **Motion** was made by Marcy to approve the appointment of Jack Ridl as Saugatuck Township representative to the Saugatuck-Douglas District Library Board of Trustees for a four-year term to expire on September 30, 2027. There was no support and the motion died.
4. A **Motion** was made by Helmrich to table the appointment of a Saugatuck Township representative to the Saugatuck-Douglas District Library Board of Trustees. Supported by Aldrich.  
Discussion: None.  
Voice Vote: 4-1  
Motion Carried 4-1.
5. A **Motion** was made by Marcy to award the River Bluff Park Shoreline Restoration Feasibility Study project to GEI Consultants for \$48,000. Supported by Helmrich.  
Discussion: None.  
Voice Vote: 5-0  
Motion Carried Unanimously.
6. A **Motion** was made by Israels to engage Hallahan & Associates, P.C. as legal representation for Saugatuck Township to defend the property tax appeal by *Watermark Properties v Saugatuck Township*. Supported by Aldrich.  
Discussion: None  
Roll Call Vote:  
Yes: Bigford, Israels, Helmrich, Aldrich, Marcy  
No:  
Motion Carried Unanimously.
7. A **Motion** was made by Helmrich to approve the acquisition of “Canary in a Coal Mine” from Shawn Phillip Morin for inclusion in the Saugatuck Township Public Art Collection at a cost of \$4,500. Supported by Marcy.  
Discussion: Alrich asked if it would be possible to see a mock up prior to purchase, with Lemanski stating that it could be done.  
Voice Vote: 3-2.  
Motion Carried 3-2.
8. A **Motion** was made by Helmrich to pursue the establishing of an Art Acquisition Committee and process guidelines for the Township, including works such as “Kalamazoo River Song Line” and prioritizing donation collection. Supported by Israels.  
Discussion: None.  
Voice Vote: 5-0.  
Motion Carried Unanimously.
9. A **Motion** was made by Marcy to recommend that the Allegan County Road Commission include the following items in the design of a future Lakeshore Drive: (1) add a separated, non-motorized path



with greenspace in between the path and road, (2) design a local road for slower speeds that include traffic calming measures, (3) prioritize convenient connections between new road and existing homesites, and (4) maximize preservation of mature tree growth with road route. Supported by Israels.

Discussion: None.

Voice Vote: 5-0.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

- 10.** A **Motion** was made by Marcy to authorize Township Staff to initiate the process of creating an ad hoc Sustainability Committee to be active for a period of 12-months and tasked with creating a multi-year Sustainability Plan. Supported by Helmrich.

Discussion: None.

Voice Vote: 5-0.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

- 11.** A **Motion** was made by Israels to approve a compensation increase to \$24 per hour for Morgan Arens, Administrative Support. Supported by Marcy.

Discussion: None.

Voice Vote: 5-0.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

- 12.** A **Motion** was made by Marcy to approve Change Order 1 from Insight Marketing Design in the amount of \$5,000 for the development of the new Township Website. Supported by Israels.

Discussion: None.

Voice Vote: 5-0.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

- 13.** A **Motion** was made by Israels to move the repurchase of cemetery plots to administrative staff. Supported by Marcy.

Discussion: None.

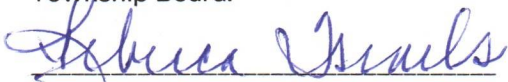
Voice Vote: 5-0.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Respectfully,

  
Morgan Arens, Recording Secretary

I, Rebecca Israels, Township Clerk, certify that these minutes were approved on October 11, 2023 by the Township Board.

  
Rebecca Israels, Township Clerk

Oct 11 - 2023  
Date