

**Saugatuck Township  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, January 10, 2024, 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, Treasurer Helmrich, Trustee Aldrich, and Trustee Marcy.

Absent: Clerk Israels

Also Present: Township Manager Daniel DeFranco, Recording Secretary Morgan Arens, Jim Searing, Chris Clark, Elliott Sturm, Jane Dickie, Tony Schippa, Scott Stearns.

**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: Bigford requested that items 3 and 5 under new business be switched

Voice Vote: 4-0.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Public Comment Closed**

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

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

Discussion: None

Voice Vote: 4-0.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

**Presentations:** None.

**New Business:**

**1. Public Hearing for 2024 Tri-Community Park and Recreation Plan**

Saugatuck Township collaborated with the Cities of Saugatuck and Douglas, and Saugatuck Public Schools to complete an update to the joint 5-Year Park and Recreation Plan. Having an up-to-date Park plan is necessary to be eligible for DNR grant programs. Plan must be adopted and submitted by February 1st.

A requirement of for updating the Park Plan is holding a Public Hearing. The Public Hearing was appropriately noticed in the Commercial Record and on the Township website. Ahead of the public hearing, Manager DeFranco delivered an overview of the project, delving into the plan's history, changes in participation from the previous plan, and the overall intent behind the updated plan.

Supervisor Bigford opened the public hearing at 6:06 PM and facilitated public comments:

- Jim Searing, Township Parks Commission Chair, provided insights into the collaborative process with the City of Saugatuck, the City of Douglas, and Saugatuck Public School. He highlighted the plan's focus on park acquisitions, bike trail improvements, and lake and river trails.

- Jane Dickie, Township Parks Commissioner, expressed her enthusiasm for being part of the Township and conveyed gratitude for the supportive community. She underscored the significance of maintaining the rural character of the Township through Zoning and the Parks Commission, extending thanks to the Board for their continuous support.
- Chris Clark, a dedicated supporter aiding the Parks Commission, commended their work and committed to providing ongoing ideas for the area, envisioning the Township becoming a Michigan Trail Town in the future.
- Scott Stearns raised concerns about the Riverside Dr project by the Allegan County Road Commission, specifically addressing issues related to tree cutting.

Bigford closed the public hearing at 6:21 PM.

## **2. 2024 Tri-Community Park and Recreation Plan Adoption Resolution**

The Township collaborated with the Cities of Saugatuck and Douglas, and Saugatuck Public Schools to update the joint 5-Year Park and Recreation Plan. The Township must adopt and submit a new 5-Year Park and Recreation Plan by February 1<sup>st</sup> in order to be eligible for DNR Grant opportunities.

To aid in this process, the Tri-Community hired Viridis Design Group. The planning process was overseen by a tri-community Steering Committee and involved multiple meetings with municipalities' respective parks commissions, a community survey, in-person community input session, 30-day public review period, and public hearing.

The Township and collaborating local units of government have satisfied the DNR's planning requirements and have prepared a draft 5-Year Park and Recreation plan with all necessary components for the Board to consider for adoption.

During the discussion, Helmrich shared a memory of the Parks Commission's welcoming approach to the current Board when they first took office. Commending their dedication, he acknowledged the budgetary contributions from their millage. Bigford echoed Helmrich's sentiments, emphasizing the Parks Commission's commitment to their goals. Marcy expressed satisfaction with the thoroughness of the report, and Aldrich concurred with the positive remarks from the Board. Helmrich extended gratitude to Viridis for their extensive research on behalf of the Township.

Bigford inquired about the adoption status of the plan by other participating municipalities, to which DeFranco stated that the Township would be the first but saw no reason why the other municipalities wouldn't follow suit. Addressing potential changes to the plan, Bigford sought clarification on the process, and DeFranco explained that changes would be handled through resolutions brought before the Board. He emphasized that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) mandates a Park and Recreation Plan for grant eligibility.

A **Motion** was made by Aldrich to adopt Resolution 2024-01, a resolution adopting the Tri-Community 2024 Parks and Recreation Master Plan by the Saugatuck Township Board of Trustees with minor revisions. Supported by Helmrich

Discussion: None.

Roll Call Vote:

Yes: Helmrich, Aldrich, Bigford, Marcy

No:

Motion Carried Unanimously.

### 3. BLS Transport Support Letter

DeFranco explained that the Township's Emergency Services Committee has been working with the Fire District to address issues of ambulance transport availability; data shows that approximately 7-10% of calls experience a lack of availability.

The Fire District has developed a plan to have two of their First Responder vehicles have transport capability in the event that a patient requires immediate transport and no ambulance is available. The Fire District is in the process of hiring three BLS certified employees and has two primary First Responder Vehicles due for replacement in their capital improvement schedule. Given this, the Fire District would be able to support BLS transport without incurring significant costs or strain on staffing than has already been planned for.

To assist the Fire District in implementing their plan, the Township Emergency Services Committee requests authorization to submit a letter of support to the Fire District Board for the transport plan. A letter of support has been drafted by the Committee.

After the overview provided by DeFranco, Tony Schippa, the Township Emergency Response Board representative, elaborated on the significance of the plan. Schippa emphasized the serious need for ambulances and BLS services, highlighting the plan's versatility and demonstrated efficiency based on his prior professional experience. He provided a comprehensive explanation of the plan's procedures. Bigford expressed her support for the plan and commended Schippa for his dedication and passion in contributing to the well-being of the community.

A **Motion** was made by Aldrich to authorize letter of support to the Fire District Board for implementing transport capable vehicles to perform Basic Life Support (BLS) transport. Supported by Marcy.

Discussion: None

Voice Vote: 4-0

Motion Carried Unanimously

### 4. Closed Session

A **Motion** was made by Marcy at 6:47pm that the Board of Trustees of Saugatuck Township assemble in closed session to consult with its litigation and general counsel regarding trial and settlement strategy in connection with the litigation filed in Allegan County Circuit Court entitled:

*Saugatuck Dunes Coastal Alliance v. Saugatuck Township and Saugatuck Township Zoning Board of Appeals et al* Case Nos. 17-58936-AA and 18-59598-AA

since discussing the trial and/or settlement strategy in open meeting would have a detrimental financial effect on the litigating or settlement position of this board. Further litigation counsel will be providing to the trustees an opinion letter concerning the above identified litigation which will be discussed during closed session. MCL 15.268(e) and (h) permit this Board to assemble in closed session under these circumstances.

Discussion: None

Roll Call Vote:

Yes: Bigford, Helmrich, Aldrich, Marcy

No:

Motion Carried Unanimously.

A **Motion** was made by Marcy to come out of closed session at 7:29pm. Supported by Helmrich.

Voice Vote: 4-0

Motion Carried Unanimously

A **Motion** was made by Helmrich to acknowledge understanding of the recommendation presented by legal counsel and acquiesce to it as presented. Supported by Marcy.

Discussion: None

Voice Vote: 4-0

Motion Carried Unanimously

## **5. Consolidated Fee Schedule Revision Resolution**

The Township received notification from its burial and cremation service provider regarding an immediate increase in service fees. In response to this adjustment, coupled with the administrative time required for cemetery services, staff recommended that the Board consider updating the Consolidated Fee Schedule to incorporate the proposed fees.

During discussions, Helmrich raised the question of reviewing the cost of cemetery plots. DeFranco confirmed that the process had already been initiated.

A **Motion** was made by Aldrich to adopt Resolution 2024-02, a resolution adopting the Saugatuck Township *Revised Consolidated Fee Schedule*.

Discussion: None

Roll Call Vote:

Yes: Bigford, Helmrich, Aldrich, Marcy

No:

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 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 informed the Board about the upcoming Michigan Township Association Conference in April, encouraging fellow Trustees to attend.
- Bigford expressed agreement with Helmrich, emphasizing the importance of Board attendance at the conference.
- Marcy inquired about the feasibility of acquiring a piece of art to serve as a focal point in Township meetings for the Board.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Public Comment Closed**

**Adjournment:** Supervisor Bigford adjourned the meeting at 8:08 PM

## MOTIONS

1. A **Motion** was made by Marcy to approve the agenda as amended. Supported by Aldrich.  
Discussion: Bigford requested that items 3 and 5 under new business be switched  
Voice Vote: 4-0.  
Motion Carried Unanimously.
2. A **Motion** was made by Helmrich to approve the consent agenda as presented. Supported by Marcy.  
Discussion: None  
Voice Vote: 4-0.  
Motion Carried Unanimously.
3. A **Motion** was made by Aldrich to adopt Resolution 2024-01, a resolution adopting the Tri-Community 2024 Parks and Recreation Master Plan by the Saugatuck Township Board of Trustees with minor revisions. Supported by Helmrich  
Discussion: None.  
Roll Call Vote:  
Yes: Helmrich, Aldrich, Bigford, Marcy  
No:  
Motion Carried Unanimously.
4. A **Motion** was made by Aldrich to authorize letter of support to the Fire District Board for implementing transport capable vehicles to perform Basic Life Support (BLS) transport. Supported by Marcy.  
Discussion: None  
Voice Vote: 4-0  
Motion Carried Unanimously
5. A **Motion** was made by Marcy at 6:47pm that the Board of Trustees of Saugatuck Township assemble in closed session to consult with its litigation and general counsel regarding trial and settlement strategy in connection with the litigation filed in Allegan County Circuit Court entitled: *Saugatuck Dunes Coastal Alliance v. Saugatuck Township and Saugatuck Township Zoning Board of Appeals et al* Case Nos. 17-58936-AA and 18-59598-AA since discussing the trial and/or settlement strategy in open meeting would have a detrimental financial effect on the litigating or settlement position of this board. Furth litigation counsel will be providing to the trustees an opinion letter concerning the above identified litigation which will be discussed during closed session. MCL 15.268(e) and (h) permit this Board to assemble in closed session under these circumstances.  
Discussion: None  
Roll Call Vote:  
Yes: Bigford, Helmrich, Aldrich, Marcy  
No:  
Motion Carried Unanimously.
6. A **Motion** was made by Marcy to come out of closed session at 7:29pm. Supported by Helmrich.  
Voice Vote: 4-0  
Motion Carried Unanimously
7. A **Motion** was made by Helmrich to acknowledge understanding of the recommendation presented by legal counsel and acquiesce to it as presented. Supported by Marcy.  
Discussion: None  
Voice Vote: 4-0  
Motion Carried Unanimously

8. A **Motion** was made by Aldrich to adopt Resolution 2024-02, a resolution adopting the Saugatuck Township Revised Consolidated Fee Schedule.

Discussion: None

Roll Call Vote:

Yes: Bigford, Helmrich, Aldrich, Marcy

No:

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Respectfully,

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*Morgan Arens, Recording Secretary*

I, Rebecca Israels, Township Clerk, certify that these minutes were approved on January 18, 2024 by the Township Board.

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*Rebecca Israels, Township Clerk*

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*Date*