



Saugatuck Township
Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 12, 2025, 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

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call:

Present: Supervisor Abby Bigford, Clerk Cindy Osman, Treasurer Jon Helmrich, Trustee Brenda Marcy, and Trustee Stacey Aldrich (attended via Zoom, non-voting).

Absent:

Also Present: Manager Daniel DeFranco, Recording Secretary Morgan Coulston, Brad Lubbers, Kathy Sturm, Elliott Sturm, Tyler DeNooyer, Jacob Boer, Bill Garrity.

Reports: Supervisor Bigford opened the floor for reports.

1. **Lisa Mize, Director of Saugatuck-Douglas Convention and Visitors Bureau**
Mize presented the CVB's 2025 Marketing Plan Overview and highlighted 2024 initiatives, including digital advertising and the discovery guide.
2. **Treasurer's Report**
Helmrich gave an update on the Township finances; the report is on file.
3. **Planning Commission**
Due to Clerk Osman's absence at the Planning Commission meeting, Helmrich, who attended as a civilian, offered a brief summary.
4. **Manager's Report**
Township Manager DeFranco gave an update on the Township projects; the report is on file.

Public Comment:

- Allegan County Commissioner Brad Lubbers provided an update on county activities and highlighted key points from the County Commission newsletter.

Public Comment Closed

Agenda Approval:

Supervisor Bigford introduced the agenda.

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

Discussion: None

Voice Vote: 4-0.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

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

1. **Bills & Review of Invoices**
 - a) Total Bills and Payroll: \$167,282.79
2. **Approval of Minutes**
 - a) February 11, 2025, Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes
 - b) February 12, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes
 - c) March 3, 2025, Special Meeting Minutes
3. **Disbursements**

a) \$3.19M

4. Reports

a) Road Commission

b) Fire Board

c) Parks Commission

d) Emergency Services Committee

e) Interurban Board

f) Harbor Authority

g) KLSWA Commission

h) Tri-Community Wildlife Committee

5. Correspondence

a) Larry Edris, former Chair of the Saugatuck Township Planning Commission and former Board President of Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy – in favor of the park acquisition.

6. Operations

a) Streetlight Resolution 2025-04

b) Consolidated Fee Schedule Update.
Res. 2025-05

c) Memorandum of Agreement for School
Summer Tax Collection

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

Discussion: None

Voice Vote: 4-0.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Fiduciary Oversight: N/A

Policy Development, Evaluation, and Actions: N/A

Legislative Actions (Ordinances): N/A

Strategic Discussions and Actions:

1. Blue Star Hwy Infrastructure Planning

The Township considered additional improvements to the Blue Star Corridor to align with the County Drain Office's planned Blue Star County Drain project. Proposed enhancements included enclosing open drainage ditches and installing approximately one mile of sidewalk along the east side of Blue Star Highway between Old Allegan Road and 134th Avenue.

Inquiries from property owners and ongoing planning efforts, such as the Blue Star Corridor Safety Plan and Housing Study, prompted discussions about extending sewer lines, installing curb and gutter, and adding stormwater drainage to better serve the corridor's future needs.

Township Engineer Tyler DeNooyer presented a potential plan with a map, while Manager DeFranco outlined the rationale for the improvements. The Board discussed options, costs, and the project's long-term impact. They requested additional information from the Manager and Engineer for further consideration.

Professional Development: N/A

Other Unfinished Business: N/A

Other New Business:

1. Trust Fund Application Park Acquisition Public Hearing

A public hearing was held to gather comments on the 2025 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Acquisition Grant Application, which proposed acquiring a 119-acre property along the Kalamazoo River in Saugatuck Township. The hearing had been publicly noticed in the local newspaper, on the Township website, and via eblast.

Supervisor Bigford opened the public hearing at 7:01 PM.

- Jim Searing, Parks Commission Chair, voiced strong support for the project, emphasizing the growing need for parks as more people move to the area. He described the opportunity as a “once in a lifetime” chance.
- Kathy Sturm praised the project, calling it an exceptional and wonderful opportunity.

Supervisor Bigford closed the public hearing at 7:09 PM.

2. Trust Fund Application Park Acquisition, Res. 2025-06

The Township had an opportunity to purchase approximately 119 acres along the Kalamazoo River, a site identified as a priority for outdoor recreation in the recently updated Parks and Recreation Plan. Staff recommended submitting an application to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) Acquisition Grant, which could cover up to 75% of the property's acquisition cost. The Township had discussed the project with the DNR, which believed it would be a competitive grant application due to the site's location and recreational potential.

Before this agenda item, the Board held a public hearing on the grant submission and received public input. The Board was asked to consider authorizing the submission of the MNRTF Acquisition Grant application, which included adopting a resolution committing the Township to a local match of up to \$1,000,000, funded through the Parks and Trails Millage.

A **Motion** was made by Osman to adopt Resolution 2025-06 a Resolution to authorize submission of a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Acquisition Grant. Supported by Marcy.

Discussion: None

Roll Call Vote:

Yes: Bigford, Osman, Helmrich, Marcy

No:

Motion Carried Unanimously.

3. Trust Fund Application Blue Star Trail Public Hearing

Saugatuck Township partnered with the City of the Village of Douglas and the Friends of the Blue Star Trail to plan and construct a three-mile extension of the Blue Star Trail, extending from Wiley Road in Douglas to 124th Avenue (M-89) in Saugatuck Township.

The Friends of the Blue Star Trail funded Prein&Newhof to design the extension, and a preliminary plan was included in the Board packet. The total project cost was estimated at \$3,839,107, with approximately 2.5 miles of the trail in Saugatuck Township estimated at \$3,224,300. Construction was scheduled for Spring 2027.

Saugatuck Township and the City of Douglas jointly applied for a Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Grant to cover 80% of construction costs. To further support the project, the Township proposed applying for a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) Development Grant, requesting \$400,000. If awarded, the Township would need to commit \$244,900 in local funds for its share of the project.

Supervisor Bigford opened the public hearing at 7:15 PM. With no public comment, he closed the hearing at 7:16 PM.

4. Trust Fund Application Blue Star Trail, Res. 2025-07

Before this agenda item, the Board held a public hearing on the Township's proposal to apply for a \$400,000 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) Development Grant to support the construction of 2.5 miles of non-motorized path from 129th Avenue to 124th Avenue (M-89) in Saugatuck Township.

The Board was asked to consider adopting Resolution 2025-07, authorizing the submission of the grant application.

A **Motion** was made by Marcy to adopt Resolution 2025-07 a Resolution to authorize submission of a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Development Grant. Supported by Helmrich.

Discussion: None

Roll Call Vote:

Yes: Bigford, Osman, Helmrich, Marcy

No:

Motion Carried Unanimously.

Future Topics: N/A

Public Comment:

- Jim Searing expressed support for proactive sewer expansion, emphasizing the importance of addressing it early to avoid the potential disruption of digging up Blue Star Hwy twice during future development.
- Bill Garrity inquired about the status of the Blue Star Drain project.
- Elliott Sturm asked about the 50 MPH speed limit sign on Blue Star Hwy south of the roundabout and who would be responsible for its removal.
- Kathy Sturm addressed the sewer proposal and Blue Star Hwy, highlighting the need for curbs to prevent parking on the shoulders and to stop illegal passing on the right.

Public Comment Closed

Board Member Comments:

- Helmrich discussed the upcoming Tri-Community sessions with Joey Andrew's office, noting that meetings would be starting soon.
- Marcy expressed gratitude to Manager DeFranco for his exceptional support to the community, commending his consistent dedication and willingness to go above and beyond.

Adjournment: Supervisor Bigford adjourned the meeting at 7:30 PM

MOTIONS

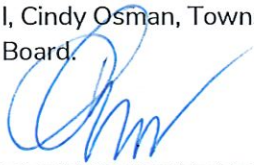
1. A **Motion** was made by Osman to approve the agenda as presented. Supported by Marcy.
Discussion: None
Voice Vote: 4-0.
Motion Carried Unanimously.
2. A **Motion** was made by Helmrich to approve the consent agenda as presented. Supported by Osman.
Discussion: None
Voice Vote: 4-0.
Motion Carried Unanimously.
3. A **Motion** was made by Osman to adopt Resolution 2025-06 a Resolution to authorize submission of a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Acquisition Grant. Supported by Marcy.
Discussion: None
Roll Call Vote:
Yes: Bigford, Osman, Helmrich, Marcy
No:
Motion Carried Unanimously.
4. A **Motion** was made by Marcy to adopt Resolution 2025-07 a Resolution to authorize submission of a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Development Grant. Supported by Helmrich.
Discussion: None
Roll Call Vote:
Yes: Bigford, Osman, Helmrich, Marcy
No:
Motion Carried Unanimously.

Respectfully,

Morgan Coulston

Recording Secretary

I, Cindy Osman, Township Clerk, certify that these minutes were approved on April 9, 2025 by the Township Board.



Township Clerk

3/26/2025

Date