

FIFE LAKE TOWNSHIP

**Fife Lake Township Hall, 134 Morgan Street, Fife Lake, MI 49633
231-879-3963 Phone / 231-879-3146 Fax**

SPECIAL MEETING

APPROVED MINUTES

Thursday, October 19, 2023, 6:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER:

Clerk Gifford called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Present: Clerk Leigh Gifford, Treasurer Cathy Sorrow and Trustees Dawn Zimmerman and Nicole Gibson. A quorum was established.

Absent: None.

Also Present:

Fife Lake Chamber Vice President and DDA Representative, Stan Patrick
Fife Lake Village President, Tom Hempsted
Fife Lake Area Planning Commission Chair, Marcia Eby
Fife Lake DDA Chair, Linda Forwerck
Grand Traverse County Commissioner, Darryl Nelson
Recording Secretary, Kay Held

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Ms. Sorrow made a motion to accept the Agenda as presented. Ms. Zimmerman seconded the motion.

VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: No conflict.

CITIZEN COMMENT:

Ms. Deb Newell, 8927 Wil-Pet Drive, Fife Lake, MI 49633:

Ms. Newell commented the Interim Supervisor should possess knowledge of MTA Rules and Regulations, a background in budget and finance, working relationships in local government, grant writing and office management skills. Even as an interim position, Fife Lake Township needs someone with experience. If it were strictly on-the-job-training or simply knowing how to run a meeting, she may have applied. However, strong leadership, knowledge and skills to get us back on track are needed. She encouraged Board Members that they should not vote based on popularity but rather to make the best decision for the Township and its residents. Choose the best qualified candidate.

Ms. Linda Forwerck, 121 North Boyd Street, Fife Lake, M 49633:

Ms. Forwerck stated she agrees with Ms. Newell. She has been in the position of Township Supervisor, and it is a tough job. The Interim Supervisor needs experience. Ms. Leedy possesses the necessary experience, skills and connections needed with the County Board, regional and state offices, as well as neighboring townships.

Ms. Mary Boyd, 11206 Lakeshore Drive, Fife Lake, MI 49633:

Ms. Boyd voiced her concerns about Lisa Leedy. She believes the best decision isn't always for the best qualified. She relayed her accounts regarding Ms. Leedy as Village President regarding non-payment to a lighting company, outrageous money spent going after Linda Forwerck which produced nothing, and that she was on numerous boards at the same time (DDA, Sewer, Chamber and Village) and while her boyfriend served on one of them as well. She also referenced several occasions where a Mr. Minder blew up at meetings, and she didn't intervene.

She believes we shouldn't have issues with funding, have someone wasting money, or being rude and threatening through correspondence to anyone who has helped out our community. Ms. Boyd presented the Board with a packet of emails from 2015 between Ms. Leedy and OptimaLED. Her concern is different now with Ms. Leedy's boyfriend being a candidate for

Zoning Administrator. She believes they have property in the Township and questioned whether that is going to cost the Township money in rezoning, stating this was hearsay. She believes the Board should look into these things before selecting her. She referenced keeping business in the community, but that Ms. Leedy had the tax work moved to H&R Block in Kingsley. Many things have served her and not Fife Lake.

Mr. John Strobridge, 508 East State Street, Fife Lake, MI 49633:

Mr. Strobridge reminded the Board we have weed assessment monies that need to go on the tax bill before December.

Mr. Dave McGough, 514 Bates, Fife Lake, MI 49633:

Mr. McGough, a candidate for the Interim Supervisor position, stated he has given his application much thought and has decided to withdraw his application for consideration.

Clerk Gifford stated Correspondence is not on the Meeting Agenda; however, some correspondence has been received and will be placed on the website.

NEW BUSINESS:

Interviews for Interim Supervisor Position:

Candidate #1, Mr. David McGough:

Mr. McGough withdrew his application.

Candidate #2, Ms. Lisa Leedy:

Ms. Leedy was contacted and asked if she could arrive earlier than her scheduled interview time considering Mr. McGough's withdrawal. She arrived shortly thereafter.

Each of the Township Board Members had prepared questions for the interviews, to which Ms. Leedy responded.

Ms. Gibson asked Ms. Leedy about the following topics:

- Describe her community presence over the past three years
- Identify problems in the Township today
- How to make the Township better
- Why she wants the position
- Most difficult hurdles as Fife Lake Village President
- Her guarantee and commitment to the Township given her involvement in so many things

In summary, Ms. Leedy replied:

She was appointed as Commissioner to the Fife Lake Area Planning Commission in 2021 and is currently Secretary. She has worked with individuals, businesses and the DDA, written grants, and manages documents through the Google Drive.

Regarding problems in the Township, she believes small units of government working collaboratively have been an issue. She has recently been working with the library on a capital grant application. She would like to improve transparency and get more of the community involved.

She realizes there is a substantial task list in the Township that she would focus on. The Planning Commission is scheduling an annual joint meeting in January with the municipalities to facilitate communication and determine ways to work together.

Her interest in the position stems from her experience moving to Fife Lake 20 years ago where she essentially started her life over. People in the community invested in her; her personal achievements are largely a part of that. She wants to give back. Hard decisions are not always popular. She has skills and experience to offer, is willing to make time to do the job and would like to see the community come together.

Regarding the most difficult hurdles as Village President, she had a limited background at the time. She attended numerous classes, worked to get policies and procedures in place, made hard decisions, and affected change amidst resistance. She now has a great deal more experience and education and is completing her Master's Degree in Education and Community Engagement and Government Affairs. In that program she developed the life motto: Empower Others.

On answering how she can commit to the position, she replied her reliability, past performance and commitment are key. She makes herself available to people and meetings. She recently dropped a business contract to free up some of her time and would be required to resign from the Planning Commission resulting in additional time freed up.

Ms. Zimmerman asked Ms. Leedy about the following:

Ms. Zimmerman stated her questions are geared toward MTA Authorities and Responsibilities and Michigan Legislature:

- List statutory duties of a Township Supervisor
- Board of Review functions
- Budget experience
- Audit involvement
- Response to a disaster or emergency in the Township
- Management of Township records
- Knowledge of MTA
- Training before/during/after role as Village President
- Educational background
- Grant writing experience
- How avoid conflicts of interest and personal bias, as well as maintain confidentiality
- Greatest asset to the Township
- Rate administrative computer skills
- Availability to start as Interim Township Supervisor.

In summary, Ms. Leedy replied:

The statutory duties of the Township Supervisor include that of serving as the Township's Legal Agent, official Chief Assessing Officer, Moderator over meetings and Secretary of the Board of Review. The Supervisor also creates and administers the budget. She has performed these roles as Deputy Supervisor of Green Lake Township.

The Supervisor's function with the Board of Review is to take minutes for the Board, and hear assessing concerns, exemptions and disputes. She also understands the process for situations escalating to the tax tribunal.

She has developed numerous budgets independently and within a team for private and non-profit organizations. Budgets are typically \$100k; however, she has worked with budgets up to \$7m. She responded to the follow-up question on the process to develop a budget and detailed how she approaches that function.

Ms. Leedy has been involved in the audit process, working with 7-9 different auditors on many types of audits including Act 51 audit, forensic audits and municipal and non-profit audits.

She detailed the process for Township response to a disaster or emergency, stating initial contact should be made with the County Emergency Management team. During the 2015 straight-line winds emergency, she led the Village through the process. The key to recouping costs is to get a formal disaster declaration. She has FEMA training and also planned a mock disaster through her Emergency Management class.

Regarding records management, she is unaware of the Township's current document retention process; however, knows that retention laws must be adopted and in place. Records need to be available for the public, digital records preserved, and responses to FOIA requests made. She is research-heavy and document-intense, with good record management skills.

Ms. Leedy is very knowledgeable of the Michigan Township Association (MTA). She is an educator for them and has taught classes for Supervisors, most recently on "Impact and Costs of Development for a Community."

In response to the question regarding her training before/during/after her role as Village President, Ms. Leedy distributed a lengthy list of formal trainings. It also detailed training programs she taught as an educator.

Regarding her educational background, she explained she holds a Bachelor's Degree in Organizational Leadership, is nearly finished with her Master's in Education and is a Certified Economic Developer by the International Economic Development Council. Her resume and accompanying addendum outline her education and training in detail.

She has written successful grants for at least 15 different industry sectors. She has also been on the Grantor side and served on a Peer Review Panel for Federal grants. For the Township, she has been involved in grants totaling \$4m for the community; her overall career grants total roughly \$50m.

To avoid conflicts of interest and personal bias as well as maintain confidentiality, policy and procedure are first. Historically, she makes decisions on what is best for the community, not based on her personal opinion. She believes her track record demonstrates this.

Her greatest asset to the position is a good balance of the technical side and passion for the community. She knows policy and procedure, cares about the community and feels protective over residents and businesses.

Ms. Leedy responded to Ms. Zimmerman's question about Microsoft Windows applications. She is fluent in MS Windows, the MS 365 and Google Work Space systems as well as their individual programs. She is also proficient in coordinating Zoom meetings and website administration. She responded with 5/5 for each application asked and a 4/5 regarding Social Media. She facilitated a community engagement session in Cadillac, garnering 4k participants through promotion on social media.

If appointed, Ms. Leedy would be able to start right away.

Ms. Sorrow:

Treasurer Sorrow believes Board Members adequately covered the questions she had planned to ask of the candidates.

Ms. Gifford asked Ms. Leedy about the following:

- Explain roles of Clerk, Treasurer and Trustee
- Measures to ensure financial accountability and handling of suspected fraud
- List of priorities to accomplish
- Plan to maintain roads
- Experience with the County
- Lake needs and management
- Steps related to inquiries of the former Pugsley facility

In summary, Ms. Leedy replied:

Ms. Leedy detailed the specific roles of the Clerk, Treasurer and Trustee, stating the Supervisor is a moderator and there is no difference in position levels. She believes the separation of duties is important.

When asked how she would ensure financial accountability, transparency of Township funds and handle suspected fraudulent activity, she would gather facts, bring concerns to the Board, and contact the bookkeeper, auditor and attorney before advancing to other professionals. She believes there could be improved transparency on the website and would elevate participation and knowledge in having the public involved through the budgeting workshops.

Regarding a list of priorities to accomplish, she will address the Outstanding Task List and meet with the Board to identify important priorities. She would like to provide continuity, improve transparency, and increase community involvement.

On the question of plans to maintain the roads, being involved at County functions is important. She sat on the Rural Task Force Board (Gas Tax Board), and was often the swing vote. Roads need to be prioritized and the County made aware of the needs. The Village received grants resulting in the paving of several roads while she was Village President. One example of readiness was short notice over a holiday weekend when she responded and submitted for seven roads, being awarded \$301k in funding for Pierce Street with no match required.

She has worked with numerous departments at the County level, regularly meeting with representatives on Township and non-Township matters. This includes the County Commission, Health Department, Construction Codes and others. Most recently, she has joined the Address Committee through the Board of Equalization.

On lake management and its health, she believes the Lake Committee is important. The Special Assessment District Fund needs to be revisited. The Board has worked well with the Lake Committee in the past with good results; however, there is room for improvement in policy development and website content.

In response to inquiries regarding the redevelopment of the former Pugsley facility, she would point prospective applicants to the permitted uses and referenced the recent situation with an organization out of Grand Rapids. She would inform the party of the process, application, and checklist adopted by the Planning Commission. She believes it would be very important for the public to weigh in and would hold open houses. Ms. Leedy explained the importance of the Master Plan and the function it serves.

Clerk Gifford asked for any additional Board questions before moving on to the Second Public Comment. She noted that decisions of the Board are made for the best interest of the community. She thanked Ms. Leedy for the interview.

Ms. Leedy remarked that people are passionate about the community, and it is important to look at the commitments people have made. While she has taken her share of criticisms, it would be nice for everyone to come together with solutions rather than work in a combative environment.

CITIZEN COMMENT:

Ms. Linda Forwerck, 121 North Boyd, Fife Lake, MI 49633:

Ms. Forwerck stated she is a former Supervisor and current DDA Chair. Regarding comments of the past shared about her and Ms. Leedy, she referenced her grandmother's motto was "What is past is past, look to the future."

Mr. Darryl Nelson 7466 Saylor Road, Williamsburg, MI 49690

Grand Traverse County Commissioner Nelson congratulated the Board, applicants and the community. He stated Fife Lake is a great community, and he has had the fortune of observing the Township and the Village. It is a caring, compassionate community. There can be friction. However, he sees people trying to do good things for the community. He understands this is a stressful period. Sometimes an outside perspective is helpful and that this community is doing very well.

Board Consideration and Discussion:

BOARD ACTION:

Ms. Gifford made a motion to appoint Ms. Lisa Leedy as Interim Fife Lake Township Supervisor for the next 13 months, term ending November, 2024. Ms. Zimmerman seconded the motion.

There was Board discussion.

Trustee Zimmerman reiterated Ms. Leedy is qualified and meets the statutory duties. She would not require training. She has strengths as an MTA Instructor, Secretary of the Planning Commission, Township Deputy Supervisor experience, her B.S. in Leadership, grant writing skills and more. Ms. Zimmerman believes this applicant would be an asset serving as Interim Fife Lake Township Supervisor.

Ms. Gibson stated Ms. Leedy is qualified for this position and appreciates her compassion for the community. She reiterated her previous remarks that the Township Board was voted into these positions to make necessary decisions. However, she still believes this needs to go back to the public and voters/taxpayers. Everyone should have a voice; subsequently, this matter should go to an election.

Clerk Gifford noted the next scheduled election is in February or May. She inquired who would be performing in this role in the interim.

Trustee Zimmerman agreed this Board was elected to make decisions. She stated if there was a stalemate or no qualified candidates, a special election would be in order. However, this is not the case. A Trustee's statutory duty is as a Fiduciary to the community. It is not a statutory duty of Board Members to perform in the Supervisor's role. She believes the Township has a qualified candidate to fill the interim position, and that spending \$10k for an election is not looking after the Township monies. Because an election is an option, that doesn't mean it should be a back-up plan when there is a qualified person able to fill the role.

Treasurer Sorrow agrees with Ms. Gibson in preferring the decision could go to the voters. However, she is concerned with timing for a May election with no one filling in the position in the meantime.

Ms. Zimmerman reiterated the situation would be different if there were no qualified candidates. However, we have an applicant who can step in and be functional immediately.

Ms. Gibson stated the Board works well together, yet can agree to disagree. She stood by her conviction the voters should have this choice.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Gibson-No, Zimmerman-Yes, Sorrow-Yes, Gifford-Yes. 3-Yes, 1-No. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT:

Board Action:

Ms. Gibson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Sorrow seconded the motion.

VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

Ms. Leedy was sworn in by Clerk Gifford after the meeting.

Submitted by: Kay Z. Held, Recording Secretary