

O'Brien, Kevin M (LARA)

From: Jane Verplank [verplankj@yahoo.com]
Sent: Friday, July 20, 2012 3:44 PM
To: O'Brien, Kevin M (LARA)
Subject: Letter about Saugatuck non consolidation
Attachments: To the State Boundray Commission.docx; Consolidation.docx

Kevin

Please find attached my address at the public hearing and also a cover letter.

Thank you
Jane Verplank
Mayor of saugatuck
verplankj@yahoo.com

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To the State Boundray Commission:

As the idea of consolidation looms over the area several things come to mind. The Consolidated Government Committee, who has presented the SBC with this petition, knows little of government and how it works. The one member who was involved in government seems to, most surprisingly, have forgotten to do her homework. Important issues must be presented to the voters, things like timed debt retirement, fund balances, combining unlike salary schedules, union and non-union employees, funded and unfunded retirement plans, road millage, etc. Voters need to understand that this process of combining two governments is not like waving a magic wand and tomorrow we are one government. The statement that it is not about the money is foolish and totally disrespectful. Both city councils spend hours and hours discussing budgets, millage rates, debt retirement, equipment purchases, healthy fund balances. To take our well run cities, spend our fund balances on consolidation, leaving us with no fund balances to run our cities makes us burdens on the state, like Detroit and Benton Harbor.

"Together we are one"? Please show us at what expense and more importantly at what savings? Saugatuck and Douglas are in totally different stages of development. Douglas's infrastructure has not been updated in years, Saugatuck just completed a huge infrastructure and road rebuilding project. Saugatuck is basically "built out" where Douglas has potentially huge development areas.

The CGC has carefully skirted the cost of writing a new charter, new zoning books, new ordinances, new policies and procedures. The state of limbo we will be in for several years is never discussed. To blend these cities together and make the rules applicable to the two cities would be a nightmare at best. Who would do this has never been addressed. The people of the CGC, if they were to do it, have no background in government, so for them to write a charter would take years and millions of dollars in legal help. The two governments as they exist now have no interest in combining so it's very unlikely that those public servants would be interested in spending the next years writing a charter. To profess that we can get EVIP funds, especially in the hundreds of thousands is wistful at best (what if we don't get it?) who will write the grant and where does the up-front money come from? This is still wasting "my" tax dollars.

So it is our premise that the voters have no information about what they are voting on. A "trust me there is money to be saved" is irresponsible at best. The petition that was signed has been significantly altered. The CGC has published in the newspaper and by written legal opinion that they have the authority to change the boundaries and proceed with consolidation of the two cities. We all know this is not the case. Until the CGC presents the voting public with some sort of a plan of consolidation this petition should be denied.

Jane Verplank
Mayor of Saugatuck

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Today speaking for the City of Saugatuck will be the mayor, the past mayor Barry Johnson and the mayor pro tem Bill Hess.

I am Jane Verplank, the mayor of Saugatuck. I am a decision maker like all of you at the State Boundary Commission. Like you I am charged with making decisions based in accurate and factual information. In 2008 I was handed the Plante Moran Study for consolidation. The first note I made on the plan was this was a study **for** consolidation not a study about consolidation. I read the study and put my questions in red ink on the borders. These questions are still the same questions I have today.

As this plan was developed the cities were never contacted by Plante Moran when they did the financial analysis, they took our budgets off line and made assumptions about how our city spends its money. I do not make decisions based on assumptions. What has been submitted by the petitioner still does not have enough information to convince me an elected government official to spend this cities money backing this plan. I need a budget of more than a ½ page.

There is no plan to take us to completion. No thought of where the money to do this comes from. Maybe a grant but that is a huge unknown. No application is ready to go. A grant cannot be applied for with no business plan, no budget, no

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governmental agency to initiate the grant, receive it or administer it

This consolidation cannot be done without a government buy in

- Not one of the three governmental units involved supports this plan.
- The City of Saugatuck has no funds to pay for this very costly journey into the unknown.
- If the SBC approves this consolidation there is no plan of action
- No model of what this government looks like
- No detailed complete budget has been submitted
- No time line to establish a new government, this will leave our cities in limbo for numerous years

No list of expenses

- A charter needs to be written,
- New ordinances
- New zoning regulations
- New policies and procedures
- Legal fees for these rewrites will be astronomical

Once Saugatuck with all its personal touches is gone, it is gone forever there are no do overs, no take backs.

Big government only gets bigger never ever smaller.

What a travesty to lose our community to an unfounded unfunded promise. It has been quoted we may save anywhere from 1.2 million down to \$400thousand.

- I have seen no factual information to validate these claims.
- A ½ sheet of paper that is the budget (this week) says we save \$540thousand
- Where is the detailed budget, we all know the devil is in the details.
- When you ask a question of the SBC you get “this is a work in progress”.
- Does it make sense to write a blank check to “a work in progress”?

As an elected official of the City of Saugatuck, I do not have enough factual and accurate information to back consolidation.

I would ask the boundary commission to deny this application on the basis that there is not enough accurate information presented to make a decision.