

House Local Government Committee Testimony – March 7, 2013

Consolidated Government Committee of Saugatuck Douglas; we-are-better-together.com

1. Origins of Consolidated Government (CGC) Committee – by Travis Randolph, CGC Chair

- 1989 Tri-Community Plan first raises consolidation option
- 2009 Plante Moran and MSU Studies find significant consolidation savings
- 3 years ago, 8 citizens, not well known to each other, formed CGC as ballot question committee
- Mid-2010 CGC vetted Plante Moran, hired Mitchell Research to determine voter acceptance: overwhelming support in cities, slight majority in township
- Retained legal counsel and engineering firm to prepare petitions – alone a \$20,000 cost
- Circulated petitions in summer-fall 2011; presented in November
- SBC proceedings throughout 2012 with consolidation order coming in January 2013
- Moving towards referendum election this year, if SBC acts soon.
- Overall cost thus far: over \$100,000; raised from CGC members & supporters; no government funds

1. SBC Statute and Process – Travis Randolph

- Daunting process for citizens committee: so many barriers preventing consolidation issues from reaching the voters.
- As now constituted, any consolidation may have to survive four elections; defeat at any one ends the process: too many elections
- Petition requirements too complex: signatories to petitions never read the required legal descriptions or even look at the packet of 20 maps.
- Competitive Grant Assistance Program (formerly EVIP) assistance for consolidation only available to governments; should be available to legally formed ballot question committees
- Few governments will put themselves out of business

2. Consolidation policy recommendations – Jim Storey, Advisor to CGC

- 2010 Census revealed Michigan's problem compared to other states: too much government
- State should develop office of consolidation to provide technical assistance, guidance to ballot question committees
- Reform of local government unlikely to come within existing structure
- Citizen committee formation and support should be a state govt priority
- Like state constitution, local govts should be required to put consolidation questions on the ballot for the voters to decide

**Exhibits: Wall Street Journal graphic, June 2011; Petition packet
CGC February 2013 Progress Report; Committee Roster**

THE CONSOLIDATED GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

Post Office Box 967 | Douglas, Michigan 49406

An Update on the Committee's Work

Some History | Accomplishments to Date | What's Ahead

February 7, 2013

***Our energizing idea:
Bringing consolidation before the voters***

Consolidation of the municipal governments of Saugatuck and Douglas—although recommended by many studies and plans dating back nearly 30 years, notably including the universally endorsed Tri-Community Plan of 1989—had long gone largely ignored by local elected representatives. Preferring a “business as usual” approach to local government, not one of the governments seriously studied consolidation, let alone ever organized a binding vote on the matter.

Three years ago this month, a group of citizens without official titles or government positions, decided that if government wouldn't act on consolidation, the citizens would have to do it themselves. Informed by two expert cost-of-government analyses from Plante Moran and the Michigan State University Extension Service, they created the Consolidated Government Committee, “the CGC,” for short.

The CGC's goal, then and today, is to bring voters factual information in support of the merits of choosing a single consolidated government for the Saugatuck Douglas community. This new government will be more efficient; will be united in its strategic focus for the future; will draw on the talents of all its people; and will be highly responsive to their needs and goals.

The short version: We're better together.



Thanks to a petition drive that garnered 443 voter signatures, and the assembling of land surveys and other legally required support—both efforts marshaled by the CGC—the state-required consolidation process commenced officially in 2011. That process included thousands of pages of testimony and reports, and months of study by the State Boundary Commission. All this culminated on January 4, 2013 with the State of Michigan order to consolidate “The City of Saugatuck Douglas.”

Immediately thereafter, referendum petitions on the consolidation order were circulated in the two communities, ironically enough, by consolidation opponents whose efforts until that point had been aimed at thwarting any citizen voting on the matter. All available CGC members signed these petitions making good on the committee’s longstanding support for a citizen vote on consolidation.

Putting the groundwork in place

Meeting nearly every week over the past 36 months, the CGC volunteer members have engaged in outreach, study, and communications efforts related to consolidation. All this was undertaken at private expense without a penny of taxpayer funds. Much has been accomplished:

- With the assistance of volunteers, mailed 3,000 letters describing the CGC’s work to every registered voter in Douglas, Saugatuck and Saugatuck Township.
- Invited the leaders of the three governments for briefings on the committee’s goals, efforts, and results.
- Conducted Saturday open houses during the fall of 2010 for citizen input and education.
- Commissioned Plante Moran to conduct two separate studies aimed at projecting minimum annual cost-savings resulting from consolidation.
- Created and placed local advertising under the theme “Saugatuck & Douglas: We’re better together!” highlighting consolidation procedures, supplying facts, and dispelling rumors.

- Held numerous meetings with state, national, and county officials—and local press—to inform them of the committee’s work.
- Invited local business and non-profit leaders to information sessions to share the details of the Plante Moran cost-saving studies, the CGC’s own findings, and to solicit their suggestions and ideas.
- Launched a website with up-to-date, researched information on consolidation; maintained the site on a near-daily basis to share, and as needed, update the large body of information the CGC has amassed.
- Saw our website—we-are-better-together.com—grow to become a community information resource: Last month alone, 2,372 visits were recorded.

Where we’re headed from here

The CGC’s members—all veterans of the competitive business world—believe the communities that will most expeditiously exit the current recession and thrive in the future will be those efficiently governed and possessed of a compelling and well-articulated strategic vision. These focused local governments will remove barriers to attracting jobs and new opportunities. The beneficiaries won’t just be today’s citizens, but also the generation now in our unified school system. Consolidation provides a solid platform upon which to achieve all this.

We are about to enter “the campaign phase” during which the CGC will even more directly engage citizens in a discussion about the benefits of consolidating the two currently duplicated municipal governments. In all our interactions, publications, and statements, we are committed to continuing our record of fact-based information-sharing and discussion. The CGC has not, and will not, engage in speculation on people’s motives, ad hominem attacks, or raising issues beyond the control of local voters.

At the same time, however, the CGC will continue to correct the record when incomplete, misleading, or faulty information is presented to voters as part of the consolidation discussion. We will not hesitate to point out errors of fact so voters can arrive at conclusions based on sound information, not emotional chicanery.

We have too much regard for our fellow citizens to sit by quietly when they are deceived or misled.

In the coming campaign, the CGC remains committed to straight talk. We've all waited a generation and a half to have this debate. Let's make the most of the opportunity.

THE CONSOLIDATED GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

Travis Randolph
Chairman

Frank Lamb
Treasurer

Bobbie Gaunt

Catherine Simon

R.J. Peterson

Max Matteson

Steve Hutchins

Paul Marineau

Dan Fox



Members of the Consolidated Government Committee

P.O. Box 967 – Douglas, MI 49406 – Contact: Jim Storey, 616-848-9767; jmstore@yahoo.com

we-are-better-together.com

Travis Randolph, Chairman – Forty eight year resident of the area, at present residing in Saugatuck Township; property owner in Saugatuck and Saugatuck Township; business operator in Saugatuck and Zeeland.

Frank Lamb, Treasurer – Born in Douglas, raised in Saugatuck, graduated from Saugatuck High School and Michigan State University. Employed at Lloyd J. Harriss Pie Company for many years and retired from J. B. Laboratory in Holland in 2007. Served on the Saugatuck School Board, Saugatuck Township Park Commission, Mt. Baldhead Challenge Committee and various church boards. Currently volunteers at the Douglas Elementary School and the Saugatuck Douglas District Library. Lifelong resident of Saugatuck Douglas area.

Bobbie Gaunt -- With husband, Bob, Gaunt chose Saugatuck as the principal (and only) residence following her retirement from Ford Motor Company in 2000 where she was an officer of the Company and the President and CEO of Ford Canada Ltd. In 2003 Bobbie agreed to chair the board of the Saugatuck Center for the Arts which position she held until April of 2008. Bobbie is a member of the Board of Trustees at her alma mater, the University of Pittsburgh. Bobbie and Bob with their business partner, Jeff Phillips of Saugatuck, own automotive dealerships.

Steve Hutchins – retired airline captain, 15 year resident of Douglas, former President of the Saugatuck Board of Education, member of the board of the Saugatuck Douglas Historical Society and the Saugatuck Douglas Educational Foundation, and former Saugatuck Troop 29 Scoutmaster.

Max Matteson – Douglas resident and retired past president of Salon Enterprises comprised of Panopolus Salons, Hair Cuts Plus Salons and Chic Cosmetology Schools

R.J. Peterson – Resident of Douglas-Saugatuck area since late 1930's, owner-operator of Tower Marine and several affiliated water-related job providers, organizer of Saugatuck-Douglas Chamber of Commerce, and lifelong entrepreneur.

Catherine Simon – 20-year resident of Saugatuck, active in several civic organizations, including service on the Saugatuck city council during which she served a term as Mayor, proprietor of a bed and breakfast, The Maplewood Hotel.

Dan Fox – recently retired Chicago advertising and public relations executive. Resides in Saugatuck and volunteers for the Saugatuck Center for the Arts.

Paul Marineau – former Mayor Pro Tem of Douglas, certified public accountant and attorney. Professor at Cooley Law School and international business law practitioner.

OVER

Saugatuck Douglas Consolidated Government Committee Roster – page two

Jim Jeltema – 25 year Saugatuck township resident and business owner/operator of Clearbrook Golf Club; past board member of the Saugatuck Chamber of Commerce, Saugatuck Douglas Conv. & Visitors Bureau, Michigan Golf Course Owners Assn., and 20-yr co-organizer of Taste of Saugatuck Festival.

ADVISOR – Jim Storey, StoreyLine Connections –Holland-based public relations, campaign management and liquor licensing consultant who helped organize and manage the committee's activities since its 2010 inception.

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