

# Three examples of how our Fruitport Township Supervisor operates

## A Journal of my experience with the Fruitport Superintendent issue

By Fruitport Township Treasurer, Rose Dillon  
Friday, February 5, 2016 (before Monday’s February 8 board meeting)

On Friday afternoon township supervisor Brian called me into his office. Chuck Whitlow was in the room and they asked me to close the door (that in itself should have raised a red flag for me). They both told me of this new government plan. It is the first time I had heard anything about this plan. Brian told me that he needed job security and this new job of Twp. Superintendant would guarantee him that since he had a family. He did not want to run for Supervisor as there was a chance he could get defeated and the new Supervisor would have no idea what was going on in the township. It occurred to me as he was speaking that this new job of Superintendent was created specifically for Brian. Brian told me he had had a lot of meetings with the Grand Haven and Park Township Superintendents. Chuck and Brian told me that the township needs consistency with our continual growth and the Superintendant position would guarantee us that. I said that there could be a change in that position also, like in Roosevelt Park. Brian said the only reason they had a turnover is because they decided in December of each year if they would keep the City Manager or not, rather than give him the job security of a several year contract.

Brian and Chuck told me they would make the Supervisor a part time figurehead position. The part time Supervisor position had been offered to Trustee Dave Markgraf. He would be appointed and in November would run for office as the incumbent. Dave had told them he was not interested. The job was then offered to Trustee Ron Becklin who was getting ready to retire. They stated that he would take the job, but if Ron did not they had agreed on another person that would take the position.

They told me that as I was doing a good job in my position that I had three choices and that I should “go home and talk to Greg” about what I should do. The three choices they said I have are:

1. run for the figurehead treasurer
2. keep the treasurer full time and run for that position
3. work with them on a contract employee agreement where I would not be the treasurer, but would do the work of a treasurer. If I decided to run for the full time treasurer they would not make a change in that position until I left the township.

I was amazed to see that everything had all been planned out. I stated that I felt the department directors and the board, clerk, treasurer and supervisor were all working together as a team and that’s why we were doing so well. I stated that Brian would not have that much trouble getting reelected. I learned in that meeting that Brian was pretty much the sole reason for the success of the township and we need to hire him as Superintendent to keep the township going in this direction.

They told me the Clerk was wishy washy in trying to decide if she would retire or not. As others were doing some of her duties, the Clerk should go to a figurehead position and Carol could run for that if she wanted to. If she wished to continue as a full time Clerk she would be given additional duties that she should be responsible for anyway according to State Statute or something.

At some point in the meeting I was given a copy of the Superintendent’s contract. I left the room wondering what had just happened!

## Tuesday, February 9, 2016 (after the board met where the issue had been tabled because Becklin decided not to vote for it)

By Rose Dillon

Chuck came into my office the day after the board meeting and asked if I would call Carol and have her come into my office, too.

He began to tell Carol and I that at the next board meeting work session we would be working on Brian’s contract. He would not be there as he will be on vacation. When it came time to discuss Brian’s contract, we were to vote to go into closed session as this would be some kind of em-

ployee confidence and should not be discussed in front of the public.

Chuck stated that he wanted us to be very clear that Carol’s and my jobs would not go into a figurehead position until we were ready to retire or leave the township, but upon us leaving the full time position it would go to figurehead and we could run as part time figurehead at that time.

I received a phone call from one of Chuck Whitlow’s restaurant customers and they told me they heard him telling other customers that Carol and I were confused at the meeting, but now he had talked to us and we were no longer confused and understood the entire process they have been working on.

## February 12, 2016 (after the February 8th meeting)

Trustee Marge Nash came to the township hall. She wanted to ask township Supervisor, Brian, some questions and asked me and Carol to go into his office with her. Carol said she could not go into his office because more than three was considered a township meeting, but could stand outside the office.

Margie asked Brian why she was kept off the Public Safety Committee. Brian said it was because she had done something that it would make it illegal for her to be on a Public Safety Committee (which I doubt). He also stated that Ken Doctor had demanded that she not be placed back on the committee.

In the meeting Brian talked quite nicely to Margie and did not talk down to her like he usually does. He apologized to her profusely. He said he had gotten too busy the Friday before the board meeting to talk to her about the “change in Government” plan. This was sickening to me as Brian and Chuck had both stated that Margie was worthless on the board, she did not ever participate and they would not waste their time talking to her about their plan.

At one point in the conversation Brian pointed his finger at me and said that I was the one responsible for the problem on the board on this issue. He stated that I spoke with a county commissioner and had made several phone calls and visited several people to stir up a problem. I was the reason the board room was packed for the meeting. I thanked him for giving me all the credit for filling the board room. He must have been surprised that I would say that to him and changed his tune by saying that most of the people were there to celebrate with Brian Michelli’s promotion and Ken Doctor’s retirement. I stated that I had called Trustee Ron Becklin and had visited Trustee Dave Markgraf over my concern about pushing the new plan of government and the contract we had been given on the Friday before the Monday board meeting. Brian had met with both Trustees the Thursday before the board meeting behind closed doors. He told me he had went over Brian Michelli’s contract with them and did mention that he had talked to them about the new plan of government. Ron told me when I called him that Brian told him about the new plan of government Thursday, February 4, 2016.

Brian was going on about the meeting he had Friday, February 5, 2016, first with me and then with Carol. I disagreed on several things he told Margie and told him so. Carol asked me to leave the room so she could go in. She was angry at what Brian was saying and told him he was not saying the truth. Carol and Margie were in the room with Brian. I was sick of listening to him and went back to work.

## This statement from Fruitport Township Clerk Carol Hulka, Treasurer Rose Dillon, and Trustee Margie Nash, was read at the March 28 township board meeting by Rose Dillon.

On March 14, 2016 the township board of trustees met at 6:15 p.m. for a work session.

Trustee Chuck Whitlow stated that before the session began he would like to say something. He proceeded to get out of his seat and walk around to the front and face the board. He began talking about the Superintendent position and township government reorganization and how it was simply up for discussion. He proceeded to bully each

one of us starting with Margie, then myself and then Carol.

This topic is **not** up for discussion when the Superintendent contract had already been drawn up by the township attorney with a start date of April 1st. It is **not** up for discussion when it had already been determined who the figurehead Supervisor would be, that he would begin April 1st and that he would be paid \$5,500. It is not up for discussion when we are told that when Brian abstains from voting on his own contract that Chuck will make sure he has to vote so they will have the four votes they need to get their plan though.

Scolding and harassing us is unacceptable behavior. There is no hierarchy on this board. No one has more authority than another. This entire board is elected by the residents of Fruitport Township. We should never have to worry about coming to a meeting to be harassed or bullied by one of our peers on this board.

Every board member at the February 22 meeting voted to be done with this issue, why was he picking on just the three of us?

## NEWS & VIEWS In regard to the proposed township Superintendent Agreement and Possible Criminal Implications

By Ron Cooper, Editor

April 7, 2016

Proposed changes to our township management should be guided by what is best for the township – not what is best for any particular individuals on the township board. For Werschem and Whitlow to try to sneak it through before anyone could stop it, is especially troubling!

I can understand why Brian Werschem would like a \$12,000+ raise a year, not have to run for re-election, and a contract that’s unchangeable, and that takes authority for him and away from the township board. It’s basically a Dictator’s contract.

Particularly troubling is the additions to Brian’s anticipated Superintendent’s agreement:

“In addition, the Employee shall be the Township representative on the Muskegon County Central Dispatch and Coordinating Committee. The Employee shall also be the Township’s primary contact and liaison with the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, and the Township’s representative on the Revenue Sharing Board and the Seventh Generation Fund Board, or the functional equivalents thereof, as established by the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians.”

By putting this in the contract, Brian and Chuck would take this authority away from the township board. It would put Brian and Chuck in a position to extort favors and money. The only way the board could get this authority back and away from Brian would be to cancel the Superintendent’s contract which would be very difficult and costly to do.

I can understand why Trustee Charlie Whitlow would work hand in hand with Brian to construct a contract like that with The Little River Band of Ottawa Indians affairs locked into it so he could have a good shot at some of the Indians’ money and business. He has property and a business close to the Indians’ property and it’s easy to see that he is looking out for himself. Neither one should have been able to vote on this self-serving issue and they knew it! Knowing it, puts them at risk of being charged with a Felony.

What I can’t understand is why Trustee David Markgraf and Trustee Ron Becklin would be expected to go along with Werschem’s and Whitlow’s shenanigans. They are supposed to represent what is best for our township, not what is best for Brian and Chuck. To Ron Becklin’s credit he did decide to not vote for it after becoming more informed, and Werschem and Whitlow lost the votes needed to make it done and final.

People have voiced concerns about corruption associated with projects like the casino. Could this be the first known attempt in that direction?

Another coincidence: Normally the number 6 item on the township board meeting agenda is public comment. It comes before unfinished business and new business on the agenda. For the