

**SUGAR SPRINGS PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION  
(SSPOA)**

**MEET THE CANDIDATES FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
MAY 22, 2021**

**The following was audio recorded at a Meet the Candidates meeting sponsored by the SSPOA Board of Directors and SSPOA Administration. It was held in the Activity Center under the Covid-19 restrictions and guidelines issued by the State of Michigan. Approximately fifty (50) members attended.**

**Transcribers note: In several instances, audio sounds prevented recorder from picking up verbiage. Those moments are indicated as such: (\*\*\*)unintelligible). Names of questioners were not included in this text but made available to candidates who wished to contact them individually.**

**Meeting began at 10:00 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance followed by General Manager, David Harris speaking:**

Welcome to Meet the Candidates, 2021. I did put out a notice on Constant Contact with the Agenda for this meeting. Before we start, I'll ask if you are vaccinated. --- (All in attendance responded with a wave of arm.) – Congratulations to all. I'll go over the rules and have each of the candidates come to the podium to give a brief explanation as to why they are running for the Board. At that point, if anyone wants to ask a question, we have provided paper and pencils on the table, please write your name and realm and question. Hopefully we will answer all the questions that are asked. Before I ask each candidate to come up, I would like to have you stand up and introduce yourselves:

Thomas Hug (Incumbent)  
James Issitt (Incumbent)  
Sandra Kitchen  
Charles Norris  
Mark Smith  
Sherri Visnaw

In the same order, I'd like each candidate to come to the podium and for two minutes state why they want to be here. No video recording is being done. The meeting will be transcribed verbatim and will appear on Constant Contact and in the Sugar Scoop when it is available.

**Thomas Hug:** First and foremost, I want to speak to everyone in the audience and thank you for all your patience during the last year during the Covid times. It was a challenging time with moving to a new General Manager. We didn't know where all the financial information was going to "shake out". We didn't know if we could open the golf course or not. We didn't know if all we were planning last year was really going to happen. I am just going to talk about my time on the Board. I have a lot of passion for Sugar Springs. When I was diagnosed with cancer in 2012 and I wasn't sure how long I was going to be here, this community was one of the best communities I have ever lived in in my life. I was getting cards from people I didn't even know. I could see 48624 but they only heard about me. I have a lot of passion for this place, have been involved in a lot of things, have been on the Board for six years and anyone that has been around for six years or longer can see the vast improvements that we have made. I look at the restaurant – I call that the "field of dreams". We got the thing done. It wasn't Phase 2 of the big project, but when you look at the numbers, April of this year is the best April as far as sales go and the best in the history of Sugar Springs. If we compare the numbers from 2019 we are \$25,000 ahead of what they were in 2019. I would like to share with everybody to please be patient when you are there. We are struggling to get employees due to the pandemic. The service might be a little slow, but we are working with a minimal, skeleton-type crew. At this point we are trying to get new employees up and trained. (Two minute timer timed out)

**James Issitt:** Good morning everyone. Anybody that knows Tom knows that two minutes was not going to work. (Laughter) My wife, Pat, and I have called Sugar Springs home since 2003. When we got here we were immediately greeted by friendly faces; got to learn that volunteerism here is huge here in Sugar Springs. For all of you who haven't volunteered you should volunteer. That is the life blood of the community. The Board couldn't do their job completely without the help of the individuals who are on the Recreation Committee, the Lakes Committee, and all the Committees. They are advisors to us as we try to carry forward with the business of Sugar Springs. I have to favor Tom's comments about passion ... I love Sugar Springs, Pat loves Sugar Springs. That is recognized as the fact that we both served on committees here, we both chaired committees. I have been on the Board and finishing my ninth year as Board member and for seven of those years I was Board President. A job which I enjoyed and felt the job was

challenging and a job that I felt was rewarding in the things we wished to accomplish. I have since turned over the Presidency to Tom and he is to be commended for the job he has done. Other than that I look forward to your questions. I must say to enjoy what you have, cherish what you have as it's a rare commodity that we have in Sugar Springs.

**Sandra Kitchen:** Good morning everyone. I hope everyone had a better year than I did. I had Covid in November so I am still walking a little funny, but am still right up here. Glen and I are fairly new to Sugar Springs. I used to be very involved wherever I was at. I have a legal background and a Title Company background and I really want to understand how everything works and to get involved with the Bylaws and I love to meet new people. I'm here to answer any questions that anyone might have.

**Charles Norris:** People ask why you want to serve on the Board. Joking aside, I had enough people that didn't like me. Robyn and I moved to this community 29 years ago and actively involved. I served on the fire department for 15 years in Gladwin and on the Board of Directors at The Springs Camp. We try to give back to our community. I was asked to put my name in, Robyn and I have lived in Gladwin for 28 years, but we actually have only been in Sugar Springs since 2017. We bought our lot and were campers when we decided that this is where we wanted to call home. We put in our application to build and this is going to be our forever home. We are full time residents. We want to give back to the community that we like so much. I think that 2020 has really focused us to understand that this is a precious jewel we have. All we have to do is look at Sanford and Edenville and realize how quickly things can change. How we can easily lose the things we take for granted. So I am asking to serve in that capacity. To build a focus on the future and maintain what we have now. Thank you.

**Mark Smith:** I'd like to thank everybody for allowing me to volunteer to serve on the Board. My wife, Jaye and I moved here in 2017 and we live on Lake Lancelot. Over the past three-plus years we've made many great friends and we've become involved in our community and serving on the committees for the Property Owners Association. We are full timers. We enjoy all the seasons have to offer us and we have two sons and five grandchildren. I mentioned that I am involved in the association committees. I have been volunteering on the Lakes Committee for the past three-plus years and involved in everything that the committee is doing to improve our watershed and our lakes. I was recently selected as a whole voting member to that committee – prior to that I was an associate member. In addition to participating in that committee's meetings, I am very involved in all the activities that the committee is responsible for. Whether that be

clearing tributaries or cutting brush along the lake shorelines, putting buoys in at our beaches, taking them out in the fall; I've been involved in taking silt measurements and also in goose roundups. In summer months I completed the extension course that deals with Michigan Lakes Management and I have been applying what I learned in that course to the committees workings and I think that has been a valuable addition to the committee. I am on a sub-committee of the Lakes Committee that is looking at the fisheries in both our lakes. We are moving on that. In addition to the Lakes Committee I have also volunteered my time and effort for things that are well received by our Recreation Committee. I assisted with the last Winterfest. When you boil it down, I am going to do what is right for the community. If I get elected as a Board member, I will look at all the issues, be open minded and formulate my opinion in my book for what's good for the community. (Two minute timer timed out)

**Sherri Visnaw:** I am a full time resident of Sugar Springs. We moved here in 2014 when my husband, Mike, retired. I have been on several different committees, currently I am the treasurer of the Recreation Committee and have been on that committee for three-plus years. I have been on the Nominating Committee, also the Stitchers and some of the womens groups. We rented here for the first year we were here. We didn't realize what Sugar Springs was and it didn't take us along before we realized that this is where we wanted to stay. We are now in our second home that we purchased here and it is our forever home. We are on the golf course which is where you will find me most days in the summer. In the winter I am involved in all of the things that don't require nice weather. Why do I want to run for the Board? I think there is a need ... there is always room for a fresh perspective and I would like to help preserve Sugar Springs as the beautiful community that it is. Thank you.

**David Harris and POA Board Member, Craig Taunt organized the questions submitted, read the question and to whom it was directed to. Two minutes were given for response.**

**Q. Directed to Sandra Kitchen:** The last time you ran, you said you hadn't served on any committees at Sugar Springs. Have you been on any committee since then?

**A. Sandra Kitchen responded:** No I haven't. I have twice submitted my name for a committee. I just recently heard regarding one and I will be on the Memorial Committee and other than that I have not heard from anybody nor been accepted by anyone else. I do wish to be on them. Thank you.

**Q. Directed to all candidates:** How many hours per week do you volunteer here at Sugar Springs?

**A. Responses:**

**Charles Norris:** Not much. There hasn't been an opportunity.

**James Issitt:** I would say 24/7 because when anybody calls and needs something done around Sugar Springs Pat and I jump in the car and help them. We are both on committees and have Board responsibilities. Whenever we are called, we go where we are needed.

**Sherri Visnaw:** I'd like to say a similar thing. Although I am not on the Board, I am on the Recreation Committee and all kinds of things arise. My husband is involved in many things and we are always available and have been called upon in many instances.

**Thomas Hug:** I am President of the Board, on the Recreation Committee and Lakes Committee, Marketing Committee, and so on. I spend time driving around the community making sure that there are no issues. If someone needs something, I respond to it.

**Mark Smith:** For me it varies. I am primarily focused on the Lakes Committee.

(\*\*\*unintelligible) It could be 3 to 4 hours a week. Sometimes more. It is not uncommon to read emails and deal with items relating to the lakes on a daily basis.

**Sandra Kitchen:** I have tried to get involved but at this point I was not able to get involved with anything for the winter. The first year we were here I did work at the Trunk and Treat. That was a lot of fun. We were involved with cars and our daughter came and helped with children inside. Hopefully we will be able to do that again this year.

**Charles Norris:** In addition to my initial comment, I would add that Robyn and I have helped neighbors who are away from their homes with security and other issues that have arisen.

**Q: Directed to Mark Smith:** What are the most pressing issues moving forward in Sugar Springs and please suggest ways to best address these needs.

**A: Mark Smith responded:** Being involved with the lakes, one of the most pressing issues moving forward is the health of our lakes. All lakes have a natural lifespan and there is this thing called 'cultural effects' and it has to do with what the community does around the lakes and in the watershed. The practice is that how we take care of our watershed which our lakes are part of. I think that without the lakes in Sugar Springs this place would be a totally different place. It takes a community to take care of its lakes. If we want these lakes to be around for our kids and grandkids and for the future, we need to come together as a community – practice good practices and take good care of our lakes and Sugar Springs will be around for many years to come. That's one of the big issues we can all do something about.

**Q: Directed to Charles Norris:** What is your view on people who modify POA property for their own personal use?

**A: Charles Norris responded:** I'm not exactly sure what that means. I think that Commons is there for the entire community to use for our enjoyment but again if permission was done through committees, and to help community, I'm not sure what that means.

**Q. Directed to all Candidates:** What is your stand on Jetskis and boats coming too close to shore and swim platforms at a high rate of speed? What can be done?

**A. Responses:**

**Sandra Kitchen:** I do not live on the lake, so I don't see that, but I have been around lakes all of my life – a lot in Michigan. Anyone that does that type of thing – there certainly should be some sort of fines. Something be put in place to curtail this. All the homeowners in Sugar Springs that live on the lake or who have property here are concerned with safety.

**Mark Smith:** There are a couple of parts to this. First of all, a good education program where you can tell people that are coming too close to swim platforms, boats – to Jetskiers not to do that. The other part is the enforcement piece of it. We do not have law enforcement people on the lakes all the time to catch people doing these unsafe acts but we again as a community can call people out on it. You can do it in a way that's not confrontational. Wave the person down to get them stopped; talk to them. The third thing is to report them. You can take photos, report it. You can get the MC number off the vessel – that can be reported. Put it in the right hands.

**Thomas Hug:** We have a thing called Constant Contact. What the Lakes Committee is doing is constantly sending our information that is going to help with Mark's point – education, education, education. We have rules that say you must stay 100 feet away from shoreline. Can we enforce it as a POA? No, but the DNR can. As far as swim platforms and that type of thing, that has to go through a process of getting a permit through the DEQ or DNR. The DNR has been to the Lakes Committee meetings and talked about it. It is challenging for people who live in tight coves. I agree with Mark – we must go to the people and talk to them about rules. It seems as though in today's society it is a “do what I want to do and it doesn't matter to other people” but it's getting to the point where the erosion factor arises and that affects us all. When you start losing shoreline and it goes into the lakes, that hurts the health of the lake. We can as members, talk to our friends – approach our neighbors and say “Hey, follow rules!” Another point I'll make is about fertilizer. Constant Contact is appearing soon (if you haven't signed up for Constant Contact, please call the office and do so) and will have an appeal about using fertilizer. Fertilizer going into the lake from your lawn is a problem and affects the algae bloom among many other things. It's a whole part and parcel. The Lakes Committee is looking at the big picture – not just water sampling.

**Sherri Visnaw:** They have kind of said it all. Unfortunately one of our lakes is a public lake. We have a lot of non-members coming in. Chances are that I hope that most of the people that live on the lakes do the right thing. As far as others coming in through the townships launch, I'm not sure what can be done. As Mark said – get the MC numbers and turn them in.

**James Issitt:** Basically what they all said is what I would say. It is unacceptable behavior, but its nothing new. For ten or twelve years it's been manifesting and growing and even now it's more problematic than it has been in the past. I have sat on many township meetings and talked to many of chair people – getting law enforcement out here is nearly next to impossible. It's unfortunate, but when it is there (law enforcement) we see a decline in what is unacceptable in activities on the lakes. I wish we could do it more often but that's what we need to do ... get the registration off the vehicle. That's step one in the information that law enforcement needs to be effective ... even if they just go out and talk to the individual. Be vigilant – looking out for yourself and your neighbor. Try to get what law enforcement needs and perhaps we can get some additional assistance out here. By the way, the township just hired an enforcement officer for some of the issues we are having on land and it's a step in the right direction. They are listening.

**Charles Norris:** Obviously everything that has been said is true. We are seeing a greater instance of people who are not obeying the rules. I think a lot could be done through education. I don't think that younger folks are being made aware of rules. We see it on the smaller lake – people are going in the wrong direction all the time. If you see something, say something. If you see something, address it. You don't have to do it in a way that is completely argumentative; but if you let people know the rules --sometimes people don't know the rules. If you say it positively it may help. People are going by at 60 miles an hour and it is affecting our shorelines and affecting everyones safety. We have been on the boat and have had Jetskis come within a few feet of us. It can cause a lot of damage. With the lakes being down in the other areas, we are seeing a large influx of people on the public lake. I think there are things we can do through education in helping people understand not only the hazards to someones body but also the shorelines.

***REMINDER TO ALL MEMBERS: PLEASE DO NOT SHARE GATE CARDS NOR ALLOW ANYONE ACCESS FOLLOWING YOU THROUGH GATE. ONE CARD – ONE ENTRY!***

**Q. Directed to all Candidates:** Finish this sentence – Wouldn't it be great if ...

**A. Responses:**

**Charles Norris:** Wouldn't it be great if we came here and saw only great things instead of only finding problems. One of the things we have lost along the way is the ability to get along. I think we have so many things in this community that bind us that make us a community that people want to be part of that it saddens me to hear of people who want to leave our community because of discourse. I would like to see that changed. I'd like to see people wait in lines to buy lots and homes to share our facilities. Wouldn't it be great to continue to build this community.

**James Issitt:** Wouldn't it be great if we could just live another forty years? And see what this place will finally become after all the effort that these people have put in at this point in time – that dreams really do come true. That's my hope for Sugar Springs.

**Sherri Visnaw:** Wouldn't it be great if we could all get along? If there was no perceived division – everybody would be equal – homeowners, campers, part-timers, full-timers – everybody treated with the respect they deserve. Just live peacefully.

**Thomas Hug:** Wouldn't it be great if ... I have been on the Board for six years and have been to many meetings ... wouldn't it be great if your thought was "I'm a Sugar Springer". I'm not a 'laker', I'm not a 'golfer', I'm not a 'quilter' ... those are all activities that we enjoy as a community. There's a lot of volunteer organizations that do these, but if we all thought about being a Sugar Springer first instead of separating ourselves. We do that ourself. I sit on the Board – I camped up here before I built my first place, then I moved to the lake because that was my dream. So if everybody could take a deep breath and say "What can I do for Sugar Springs?" I'm a Sugar Springer, I am proud to be in this community. We have one of the finest communities in the State. We have 98 different activities that happen on a monthly basis that happen in Sugar Springs. Whether you want water aerobics, cards, stitchers, quilters, pickle ball, tennis, bocce ball and so on ... those are all activities with minimal fees. Let's be a Sugar Springer first.

**Mark Smith:** Wouldn't it be great if we all embraced the diversity that we have in this community? The diversity of interests and have an overarching view that's good for the whole. That, in my mind ... the big umbrella of the 'whole'. At the same time, we like to do the things we like to do and all pull together for the good of the 'whole'.

**Sandra Kitchen:** Wouldn't it be great if I had more to say! Everybody has expressed exactly how I feel. That we all need to get along and respect each others opinions – that we are one community. No divisions. Thank you.

**Q: Directed to Sandra Kitchen:** Last year you were for yearlong camping and VRBOs. Do you still support both of these?

**A: Sandra Kitchen responded:** We have to define a lot of that. Nothing is black and white. With regard to long term camping what I mean is that people should be able to store their campers on the lot because of the deterioration that is caused by dragging them in and out during times when the land does not really benefit from it. Also they own the property, but why not? You have all been here longer than me so you can tell me. As far as short term rentals, it wasn't that I was for or against it, I did not believe that it was defined on a correct legal basis which then caused a law suit which cost the members a lot of money. So as far as short term rentals – anytime anybody violates something, something should be put in place to enforce the abusers. Thank you.

**Q: Directed to Mark Smith:** What is your opinion of one of the most important issues facing our community:

**A: Mark Smith responded:** One of the most important issues is our lakes – taking care of our watersheds and our lakes. As I said before, it is a community effort ... all the things we do around our homes that we pay attention to ... anything that gets put on the ground potentially goes into the lake at some point in time. We want these lakes to stay around for many years. Lakes have a natural lifespan and you can help extend that lifespan with practices we take in our watershed. I think that that is a major issue that all of us have in common.

**Q: Directed to Mark Smith:** If elected, how will you remain visible within the Sugar Springs community?

**A: Mark Smith responded:** Obviously if I get on the Board, it's going to take a lot more of my time, but in the activities that I have been involved in I see Tom there, I see Jeff there, I see others that have served on the Board and they manage to find time to be in all those activities. I believe that I'll do the same. I'll be able to continue supporting activities that the other committees that we have to oversee and still do my job as a Board member. As a Board member I'll not only have those meetings, but there are work sessions and other meetings and it is a time commitment and I'm signing up for that. I think I'll still be visible and active in the community.

**Q: Directed to Sherri Visnaw:** If elected, how will you remain visible within the Sugar Springs community?

**A: Sherri Visnaw responded:** I will continue what I am doing. Like Mark said, I am already on several committees and I intend to stay on them, attend the Board meetings, attend the work sessions and help out where I can.

**Q: Directed at all candidates:** Your stand on long term (12 month) camping; short term rentals.

**A: Responses:**

**Sandra Kitchen:** You now must add in there the sewer requirements that the township is enforcing which improves that factor. If they are required to be on the sewer, maybe make that more feasible. I was not definitely talking about them actually camping. That is something that would have to be addressed by the whole community. I was more talking about being able to store their unit, cover them properly if they wish. They own the property; it seems like a property right to me. I know a lot of people don't like that. I have been a camper. My husband and I had a place in Manistee which stayed all year round but we didn't camp in the winter. It was just that you could store it there so that you didn't have to worry about bringing it off, bringing it in ... we did not have a vehicle to do it. We just left it there and it stayed there. It was a really nice thing to have because we could just hop in the car ... they had sewer and electrical there ... an attorney and friend of mine owned it. That's what I had in mind with regard to camping. With regard to short term rentals, as I said before, short term rentals ... there is always going to be abusers. The abusers have to be addressed. Not the entire community. There was nothing in the Bylaws or what the court said to say that was not allowed.

**Mark Smith:** First of all I say that I support what is in the Covenants and Bylaws and rules of the association. If there are ways to change those documents, it takes a lot of people – very organized and voting to change them – I am not in favor of changing them right now. As I said in my opening remarks, I am going to look at each issue with an open mind and listen to the discussions and formulate my own opinions and vote that way with the good of the whole of the organization and community. Regarding short term rentals, I don't have all the information on that issue so it's difficult to stand up in front of you and have an opinion one way or the other. I have heard stories from both sides but again this is another issue that if I do get elected and it comes before the Board and stays in front of the Board I will definitely participate. But right now I don't have the detailed information in order to come down on one side or the other on that issue.

**Thomas Hug:** Storage on lots? Bylaws and Covenants are our ruling documents and we've gone through this. In my time on the Board we have met with the Camping Committee and if you go back to our original documents, you can camp in your lot for five years. There has always been a "time on" and a "time off". When you are looking at a camping unit (I said I camped here for two years I had to put gravel in so that I could get my camper in and camper out and I didn't have that big of a camper), some of the newer campers can cost \$100,000 or more. If it was me, no matter what, I would want it off site and stored appropriately for the winter. When we discussed camping, we approved the camping season to start a bit earlier and extended a bit later to accommodate hunters. We further allowed a small storage shed. We followed the Bylaws and

Covenants. The easiest way to understand them is that Bylaws are how we operate our business, the Covenants covers land use. We have to get 66& 2/3% of the people to vote in the affirmative; and you have to get 66&2/3% of the membership (currently 1700 members) to vote to change those documents. We cannot touch the Bylaws and Covenants until 2028. As far as short term rentals go, we voted on that issue on the advice of the A&E Committee – it's still with our legal team.

**Sherri Visnaw:** Year round storage of campers on lots. It is not supported by the Bylaws and Covenants. I don't think that every camper is built for that. We have some that get neglected or made differently than for use in cold climates. We have storage for those campers. I am not in favor of year round storage on lots. Short term rentals – I don't think it really matters as it's still in the courts and will leave it there.

**James Issitt:** Oh the hours we've talked about this in our work sessions! Right up front – storage on lots twelve months a year, No. Not acceptable. Camping year round? It's available – in the Campgrounds. Our campgrounds are open twelve months a year. That's an available option. Short term rentals – We have not received any feedback yet. They have taken our statements and they have heard the opposition and it is in court. It is taken out of our hands. The lawyers and our insurance company says that each association that has such things has an insurance policy to protect them against litigation and fines and fees. Those are the people that are controlling the situation right now and when its finally going to be resolved, we don't know. One suggestion that I had that we discussed before and it's a possibility is to put up a set of rules and regulations for homeowners who are going to have short term rentals. These would include restrictions and guidelines and fines if they are not followed. Just to keep it as close to the vest as possible and control some of what is going on. Some people have no trouble with short term rentals, some people have a lot of trouble with short term rentals and for those people who have dealt with it – the neighbors who have had the adverse effect – we are sorry. We are thinking about it but we will have to wait and see. Again, it's in the court system and we will find out soon. Thank you.

**Charles Norris:** What a question to finalize the question and answering! I believe this is one of the issues we talked about earlier. There is an opportunity to advise when we need to. My wife and I have been married almost 35 years and in most of those years we have had a camper. I just don't believe that leaving a camper on site year round is best for you personally or the community. It's not just a camping issue, it becomes a security issue. If we have campers on site year round, we have more susceptibility to people who are into mischief as they do. We can see signs of that even within our homes that are left in the wintertime – breaking in. So I would not be in favor of leaving a camper year round. Personally I would not leave my facility there. When you have a huge financial investment in your property, you want to protect it. As far as short

term rentals, this is a sticky one. Whatever the courts decide, the Board is going to have to abide by. Now I have suggested that as each realm is allowed camping every so many years, maybe there is a proposal out there to do the same thing with short term rentals. Each realm could decide which way they want to go. I think personally that it would be awful to have someone next door to me that doesn't have any rules or regulations on how that property is used. I know that up north most short term rentals are controlled by the township and not by the POA. They had a problem up north with a young group that came in – they were having parties – I just think it's an issue you have to be careful with.

----- End of Q&A-----

Craig Taunt brought up an issue: FYI: Every member that has an older home or a camping lot or one that has been transferred from one person to another – I urge you to contact the Gladwin County Building Department to check your address to make sure your address is in the 911 system. You get your Consumers Power bills to that address – however the County does not have that address in their system. If you have an emergency and you call 911, they do not know where to go if it's not in the system. Please check your address with them.

David Harris thanked everyone for attending and thanked all candidates for their involvement.

**BALLOTS WILL BE MAILED ON MAY 27 AND MUST BE RETURNED NO LATER THAN 4:00 P.M. ON JUNE 18, 2021. ELECTION RESULTS WILL BE ANNOUNCED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING, SATURDAY, JUNE 19 AT 1:00 P.M.**

Full Bios on all candidates are available in the May Sugar Scoop and available on the Sugarsprings.net website.

Transcribed by  
Judith Sullivan, Recording Secretary, Sugar Springs Property Owners Association  
May 2021