



From the Office of Shields Township Supervisor

Official Press Release

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**\*\* FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE \*\***

**SHIELDS TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR ANNOUNCES RESIGNATIONS OF ASSESSOR,  
TRUSTEES AND CLERK**

Township government is the oldest and most immediate form of local administration in the state of Illinois. It is governed by laws and presided over by a board consisting of a Supervisor, an Assessor, a Clerk and Trustees, all of whom are elected by their constituents.

After being elected and sworn in as Shields Township Supervisor, in May of 2021, in accordance with township protocol, I provided the newly elected township trustees and clerk with information regarding newly-elected officials training, as well as access to informational materials and educational courses through the Township Officials of Illinois. Our board also continued to retain the law firm that authored the Township Officials of Illinois Laws and Duties Handbook and that teaches classes to governmental officials about governmental transparency, sexual harassment, and governmental ethics.

At the April 21, 2022 Shields Township Board meeting, Trustee Kathryn Walker-Eich, Trustee Jeff Urso and Assessor Scott Helton announced their resignations, effective on May 2, 2022. Township Clerk Tammy Bryan also announced her resignation, effective May 31, 2022. I was not able to attend the meeting, but I would like to provide context regarding their announced resignations.

In November of 2021, a township employee raised an allegation of sexual harassment and bullying against Trustee Kathryn Walker-Eich. The township Attorney informed me that the township was legally obligated to investigate the allegations the employee

raised. Trustees Jeff Urso and Kathryn Walker-Eich disagreed about the lawyer conducting an investigation and, instead, demanded that the lawyer resign. My belief in governmental transparency will not support the termination of the township lawyers or the resignation of the township attorney in an attempt to cover up any wrongdoing by trustees.

On March 31, 2022, the Township Board held a rescheduled regular meeting. I had a conflict for that date and could not attend, so I reviewed procedures with Trustee Jeff Urso so he could serve as chair of the meeting.

On April 12, 2022, the township received correspondence from the Illinois Attorney General indicating that his Public Access Counselor's office was investigating a complaint that the Township Board did not follow the Open Meetings Act at the March 31, 2022 meeting.

Specifically, at that meeting, the Township Board voted to designate Trustee Walker-Eich to serve as an intermediary between the Supervisor and the township attorney. First, that is a violation of township law. As the Chief Executive Officer of the township, I cannot be denied access to the township Attorney. Additionally, a Trustee who is the subject of an investigation cannot serve as an intermediary between the Supervisor and the Attorney. Second, the item was not listed on the agenda, so it was a violation of the Open Meetings Act for the Township Board to take final action on that topic.

In addition, the Township Board voted 2 – 2 to ask the attorney to resign. Trustee Walker-Eich and Trustee Urso were attempting to get rid of the attorney who is trying to educate them on township, ethics and harassment laws. Because it was a tie vote, Trustee Urso permitted the Township Clerk to cast the tie-breaking vote, which is not permitted by law. The Township Clerk voted in favor of the motion, asking the Township Attorney to resign. However, the motion was improper and illegal because the Board does not have the ability to terminate the Township Attorney without the Supervisor's approval, which Trustee Urso was aware of.

The Township Clerk is not a voting member of the Township Board. In addition, this item also was not listed on the agenda for final action, so the motion violated the Open Meetings Act to the extent they tried to take final action on it.

I will accept the resignations of these officials and Shields Township will continue to serve its residents.