

**From:** [Alison Middleton](#)  
**To:** [Laurel Evans](#)  
**Cc:** [clerk@co.leelanau.mi.us](mailto:clerk@co.leelanau.mi.us)  
**Subject:** FW: AMENDED: Public comments for Board of Commissioners meeting 8-20-20  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 18, 2020 1:55:30 PM

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**Amended** public comment. Has already been sent to Commissioners.

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**From:** Geradine Simkins <geradines@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 18, 2020 1:27 PM  
**To:** clerk@co.leelanau.mi.us  
**Cc:** Tony Ansorte <tansorge@co.leelanau.mi.us>; Debra Rushton <drushton@co.leelanau.mi.us>; Ty Wessell <twessell@co.leelanau.mi.us>; Patricia Soutas-Little <psoutaslittle@co.leelanau.mi.us>; Carolyn Rentenbach <crentenbach@co.leelanau.mi.us>; Chet Janik <cjanik@co.leelanau.mi.us>; Melinda Lautner <mlautner@co.leelanau.mi.us>; Will Bunek <wbunek@co.leelanau.mi.us>  
**Subject:** AMENDED: Public comments for Board of Commissioners meeting 8-20-20

County Clerk, I made an error in my previous email, and below is the corrected version of my public comments for tonight's meeting. Thank you for including THIS version and for discarding the previous version.

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Dear Commissioners,  
Thank you for your willingness to create an anti-racism resolution for Leelanau County. As we know, racism occurs at the level of individuals, families, and communities, and is embedded in most of the systems of our society. The time has come when We the People of Leelanau County want to see major change and growth with regard to antiracist behaviors and policies, including within Leelanau County government and its elected officials, staff, and structures.

The recent movement to address racism in our County began with the outrage of concerned local citizens and public figures over the racist tirade by former Leelanau County Road Commission member, Thomas Eckerle, which was so blatantly hateful it made national news. Citizens and public officials alike called for his resignation.

But several days later the responses to creating anti-racism guidelines in Leelanau County were equally as shocking, including comments made at a Board of Commissioners meeting by Commissioners Melinda Lautner, William Bunek and Debra Ruston. Their comments reflect a misunderstanding of what constitutes racist thinking and behaviors. Their comments point to the need to mandate implicit bias

and antiracism training for all Leelanau County staff and officials.

As you craft language for an antiracism resolution, which will be used as a guiding force in Leelanau County, please consider evidence-based documents already created that accurately address racism and use proven strategies for dismantling racism in local governments and entities.

Creating an accurate and useful anti-racism resolution involves more than cutting and pasting information from the Internet, as County Administrator Chet Janek did. It requires us to think more deeply, do the research, and craft a statement that is objective and accurate. It requires us to not mix up issues by burdening an antiracist resolution with our personal biases, like inappropriately inserting opinions about abortion and police, as several Commissioners proposed. That kind of twisted language is outrageous, unhelpful and ignorant of the facts.

Frankly, we feel a task force needs to be established that includes diverse citizens and officials in order to create a consensus about what an effective Leelanau County Antiracism Resolution would include.

We agree with the Commissioners who suggested including a definition of racism in the resolution. As Commissioner Debra Ruston stated, racism means different things to different people. Along with racism, several other terms need to be defined and understood. Some (but not all) of these terms include: institutional racism, cultural racism, internalized racism, racial stereotypes, discrimination, inequality, inequity, white privilege, radicalized privilege, white supremacy, oppression, internalized oppression, intolerance, xenophobia, patriarchy, intersectionality, ally, social power, and social justice, among others.

Thank you for your willingness to tackle the very difficult work of transforming structures of discrimination into structures of equity, inclusion and justice for all. This transformation will benefit each and every citizen of our county. Research has shown that active racism and passive acceptance of race-based privilege disrupts the mental health of both perpetrators and victims of racial injustice.

Likewise, alleviation of racial and ethnic injustice improves the psychological, social, educational, and economic effects on human development throughout the lifespan. The wellbeing of ALL of us depends on the wellbeing of each individual. If we have learned nothing else from this current pandemic, we have learned that everything and everyone is connected.

To summarize, we are recommending 4 things to the Board of Commissioners: 1) establish a diverse task force for creating the Leelanau County Antiracism Resolution, 2) use evidence-based antiracist language, concepts and strategies in the resolution, 3) include definitions of key terms and concepts in the resolution, or as an addendum, and 4) mandate implicit bias and antiracism training for all Leelanau County staff and officials.

Sincerely,

Geradine Simkins & Fred Heltenen  
Residents and voting citizens of Kasson Township  
275 Cemetery Road  
Maple City, MI 49664  
[geradines@gmail.com](mailto:geradines@gmail.com)

On Tue, Aug 18, 2020 at 11:56 AM Geradine Simkins <[geradines@gmail.com](mailto:geradines@gmail.com)> wrote:

County Clerk, please present our comments at the public comment portion of the Board of Commissioners meeting tonight (Aug 20, 2020). Thank you kindly.

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Dear Commissioners,

Thank you for your willingness to create an anti-racism resolution for Leelanau County. As we know, racism occurs at the level of individuals, families, and communities, and is embedded in most of the systems of our society. The time has come when We the People of Leelanau County want to see major change and growth with regard to antiracist behaviors and policies, including within Leelanau County government and its elected officials, staff, and structures.

The recent movement to address racism in our County began with the outrage of concerned local citizens and public figures over the racist tirade by former Leelanau County Road Commission member, Thomas Eckerle, which was so blatantly hateful it made national news. Citizens and public officials alike called for his resignation.

But several days later the responses to creating anti-racism guidelines in Leelanau County were equally as shocking, including comments made at a Board of Commissioners meeting by Commissioners Melinda Lautner, William Bunek and Ty Wessel. Their comments reflect a misunderstanding of what constitutes racist thinking and behaviors. Their comments point to the need to mandate implicit

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or as an addendum, and 4) mandate implicit bias and antiracism training for all Leelanau County staff and officials.

Sincerely,

Geradine Simkins & Fred Heltenen  
Residents and voting citizens of Kasson Township  
275 Cemetery Road  
Maple City, MI 49664  
[geradines@gmail.com](mailto:geradines@gmail.com)

On Fri, Aug 7, 2020 at 5:41 PM Geradine Simkins <[geradines@gmail.com](mailto:geradines@gmail.com)> wrote:

Dear Leelanau Board of Commissioners, First of all, thank you for your service to the people of Leelanau County.

I am writing to you as a voting citizen of Leelanau County asking you to request that Mr. Thomas Eckerle resign as a member of the Leelanau County Road Commission. A growing consensus of citizenry, public servants, and elected officials are also calling for Mr. Eckerle's resignation.

- Four of his colleagues on the Road Commission have called for his resignation, stating that he jeopardizes the work of the Road Commission.
- State Rep. Jack O'Malley spoke with Mr. Eckerle, and then asked him to resign because he is not fit for office.
- Governor Whitmer has asked him to resign, saying "There is no place for hate and racism in Michigan."
- And the citizens of Leelanau County are formulating a petition asking for his resignation.

Mr. Eckerle's outrageous language and behavior have sparked an outcry in our county. He has also made state and national news because of his racist language and irresponsible behavior. While he is out of line and hateful, he continues to assert he has a right to carry on in this manner. As a public official, his attitude and behavior are patently unacceptable.

You have the power to cut to the chase. Please act decisively and swiftly. On behalf of the People, please ask him to step down. If he refuses, please call upon the Governor to remove him from office.

Thank you again for your service to the people of Leelanau County.

Sincerely,  
Geradine Simkins & Fred Heltenen  
275 Cemetery Road  
Maple City, MI 49664

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## Geradine Simkins, APRN, CNM, MSN

\* [Principal, Birthways Consulting, LLC](#)

\* Author/Editor, *Into These Hands, Wisdom From Midwives* &

\* Author, *The Midwife Matrix, Reclaiming Our Bodies, Our Births, Our Lives*

\* Former President, Foundation for the Advancement of Midwifery

\* Former Executive Director, Midwives Alliance of North America

\* Expert Consultant & Co-Designer, *Healthy Native Babies Project*  
National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development

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## Geradine Simkins, APRN, CNM, MSN

\* **Owner.** [Birthways Consulting, LLC](#), expert in maternal & child healthcare, leadership, public health initiatives & advocacy

\* **Practitioner, national leader & trainer.** 44 years experience in profession of midwifery and public health nursing, [WisdomFromMidwives.com](http://WisdomFromMidwives.com)

\* **Author.** *The Midwife Matrix, Reclaiming Our Bodies, Our Births, Our Lives* (2020)

\* **Author & editor.** *Into These Hands, Wisdom From Midwives* (2011)

\* **Expert consultant.** [Healthy Native Babies Project](#), National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)

\* **Board member.** Michigan Board of Licensed Midwifery, second term

CONTACT: 275 Cemetery Road | Maple City, MI | 49664 | 231.590.3742 [WisdomFromMidwives.com](http://WisdomFromMidwives.com)

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