

MID-MICHIGAN

Gratiot County gets a new commissioner

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The Gratiot County Board of Commissioners could only appoint one candidate to fill a vacant position Tuesday; that didn't mean they were going to let the other applicants leave without recruiting them for other roles.

Remarking on the merits of all in the field of applicants for the District 3 seat Laura McCollum vacated earlier this month, all four commissioners expressed pleasant surprise at their choices.

"All of (the candidates) are nice, all spoke well," George Bailey said. "I was encouraged to see that. That tells me people are interested in Gratiot County again."

"We have boards and commissions that aren't filled, there are ways to serve, and that's a great place to start," Bailey said.

"All of you are qualified to serve," Tim Lambrecht said, echoing Bailey's statement. "Don't

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leave until you sign up.”

Board Chair Jan Bunting agreed.

“Now that we got you in here we’re not going to let you go,” she said.

After hearing introductions and asking questions of applicants Sam Smith, Karla Childers and Danny Manley, the board voted unanimously to appoint Sam Smith to the vacated seat.

Smith, a long-time mid-Michigan resident - he graduated in 1971 Carson City-Crystal High School-

and 30-year owner/director for Smith Funeral Homes in Ithaca, St. Louis, St. Johns and Elsie, said it felt like the right time to be more involved.

“I just look at this as my opportunity to give something back to the county,” Smith told the board.

Smith said he hopes to utilize his experience from sitting on other boards, including as a past president of the Michigan Funeral Directors Association and two terms on the State of Michigan Mortuary Science Board.

Smith told the board Tuesday that his schedule is fairly open because his daughter, also a funeral di-

rector, is adept at running his businesses.

“I told her I want to be a seagull, just swoop in for a pay check; she tells me I don’t have to come in,” he said with a laugh.

Smith was immediately sworn into the position and took a seat at the board table. After, he said he wasn’t sure quite yet if he would run in the regular election in November.

All five seats on the board have terms that run through the end of 2016 and are up for election next year.

“I only sat here for ten minutes so far,” he laughed. “But it’s good to be part something.”