

**GLEN ARBOR TOWNSHIP**

P.O. Box 276 Glen Arbor, MI 49636

231-334-3539 FAX 231-334-6370

Peter Van Nort, Supervisor

Pam Laureto, Clerk

Lee Houtteman, Treasurer

John Peppler, Trustee

Don Lewis, Trustee

**Special Board Meeting Minutes**

May 14, 2019

The meeting was called to order by Supervisor Van Nort at 10:02 AM in the Glen Arbor Town Hall meeting room. Roll Call – all Board members were present. Twelve members of the public were in the audience. (Each had received a summary of the May 8 working meeting with the Communication Committee). The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The Purpose of the special meeting was to develop a communication strategy.

Supervisor Van Nort presented a 3-part verbal agenda. **Van Nort asked the board if they agreed with the approach. Roll call - All agreed; none opposed.**

**Part #1 Supervisor Van Nort asked each board member if they had any lingering questions or information they needed before they could move forward. Roll call - each member responded No**

**Part #2 Supervisor Van Nort shared his written list of 7 action items. An audience member asked for a copy of the list. The meeting was stopped to make copies for each audience member and then resumed. Van Nort asked board members if the list covered everything. Roll call - All agreed**

**Part #3 Supervisor Van Nort said he would like to take up each action item individually and asked the board if they agreed with that protocol. Roll call - All agreed**

**Action Item #1: Van Nort read the action item: "To appoint a Communication Advisory Committee (CAC)". He explained this involved a name change from the "Communications Committee" to the CAC. He reminded the board that all Communication Committee members had agreed, at the May 8 working meeting, that they would continue. He indicated that one additional person had volunteered to join the committee which would bring it eight members. Motion by Lewis, support by Houtteman to change the name of the Communication Committee to the Communications Advisory committee, to reappoint all 7 of the current committee members and to add 1 additional member, Patricia Widmayer. Motion carried.**

Barb Smith asked to comment. Van Nort said no. Lewis reminded the supervisor that this is a board meeting and we did not plan the appropriate times for public comment. He asked if we could include public comment for each action item. With board agreement Van Nort said public comment would occur after each item was presented.

Public Comment:

Pat Gillula asked how members of the CAC were chosen and did the committee include full-time residents, summer residents, business owners and non-business owners. Van Nort explained there were no established criteria, all had volunteered.

Pat Gillula: Commented that if the website were used to solicit members you might have had a whole different group with different ideas.

Linda Peppler: Questioned the meeting notice; she only saw it in one place. Laureto stated it was posted at the post office, the town hall board, the website, and it was sent to the Leelanau Enterprise 4 days in advance. Peppler asked if posting in the entryway of the Township offices was adequate. Laureto agreed to post outside the office in the future.

**Action Item #2: Van Nort read the action item: "To authorize Pam Laureto to work with Raquel Jackson to bring the existing website up to date". He stated that the committee received input from Raquel and the**

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Township has worked with Raquel on its existing website. He further explained that the Township does not own its current website and that Pam has already started to work with Raquel on updates.

Public Comment:

Linda Peppler: Can you explain who Raquel is? Van Nort indicated she owns Rockwell Art and Design who works with various websites in town including the Chamber of Commerce and several Townships.

Pat Gillula: Asked for clarification on if Raquel is currently working with Pam. Laureto explained Raquel's current role and indicated that she, Laureto, had combed through the current website and identified many areas that need work. Laureto further explained that the goal is to make pressing changes immediately.

**Motion by Van Nort, support by Peppler that we authorize Pam to continue working with Raquel to bring the current website up to date. Motion carried.**

**Action Item #3:** Van Nort read the action item: "To authorize Pam to work with Raquel Jackson to build a new website which we will own and to bring it to the board for approval". Van Nort emphasized that the Township will own the new website. Laureto explained her approach and goals for the new website.

Public Comment:

Linda Peppler: Asked if the Township was going to execute a contract that will explain everyone's responsibilities in developing the new website. Van Nort - Yes.

John Volk: Asked if we could have a timeline developed for the new website. He indicated there should be deadlines so we can get the project moving. Van Nort said we would establish timelines for each of the action items after we start working on them and we would publicize the timeline.

**Motion by Houtteman, support by Lewis to allow Pam to work with Raquel to develop a new website. Motion carried.**

**Action Item #4:** Van Nort read the action item: "After board approval of the new website, to shut down the existing website, which we do not own, and make the new website go live".

Public Comment:

None.

**Motion by Laureto, second by Peppler that we shut down the old website when the new website is ready to go live. Motion Carried.**

Lewis asked that a cost analysis and a timeline report be presented on a month to month basis as we move forward.

**Action Item #5:** Van Nort read the action item: "To ask the CAC to work with Peter to develop approaches to Facebook, Instagram, and a newsletter which would go out with the tax bills, and to bring them to the board for approval.

Public Comment:

Linda Peppler: Will the newsletter be available on the website as well? Van Nort responded yes.

Pat Gillula: Commented that many people are not doing any social media because you may be asking for trouble. She gave Jupiter Florida's website as an example of an "amazing website". She suggested forgetting Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and just using the website. Van Nort explained that the CAC felt very strongly that society feels social media is an important source of information. The Township's intent is to have Social Media as one source of communication in addition to others. Lewis stated we would only use social media to get information out, we would not allow comments to be made.

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Houtteman explained Facebook and Instagram allowed for more visual information which is popular with some groups.

Barb Smith: Is there a way, once all of these communication sources are in place, that we could count how many views were on each one so that we can evaluate which types are being used most often? Van Nort said yes we can do that.

John Volk: When are the summer tax bills coming out and could we have a communication in the bill explaining what the taxpayer could look forward to regarding these action plans? Van Nort said the Township has already made the decision to put information into the July tax bill.

John Volk: Suggested that anyone who knows of a good small town website should send us the URL to the township. Van Nort said the committee did look at other sites and we should continue to look at others for ideas.

**Peppler moved and Houtteman supported that we move forward with action item #5. Motion Carried.**

Van Nort gave background information on #6 and #7 by explaining that, much to the CAC's surprise all members agreed that an electronic sign had some value in communication. The committee suggested that the Board explore opportunities to minimize the negative aspects that people have identified with the current sign. Items #6 and #7 are designed to help the Board correct negative issues with the sign.

**Action Item #6:** Van Nort read the action item: "To authorize Lee to explore removal of the tops of the signs and installing them elsewhere and bring to the Board for approval". Van Nort explained that Lee would determine costs, a timeline, and procedures for removing the tops.

Public Comment:

Linda Peppler: First, where would you put the tops? Secondly, are you going to move the flag? Linda commented that the flag was not displayed in compliance with what congress has stated – it's too close to a commercial sign. Van Nort added moving the flag as action item #8. Houtteman said it's an option to move the sign or rearrange the orientation of the two halves of the sign.

Sharon Doyle: Will we be moving the sign someplace else? Van Nort said yes. One of the options is to put the two top portions on two of the entry roads into Glen Arbor and Co Rd 675 and M-109 are being considered.

Mimi Gass: Recommended placing the tops in the public areas of the park and garden.

John Volk: Have you ever approached Brad Anderson about putting a sign under his IGA sign? There would be less liability of a sign at a 4-way stop. Van Nort said we would include that in the Boards evaluation.

Sharon Doyle: Is it also an option to keep the top? Houtteman said according to the CAC the tops should be removed. He will be exploring all the options.

Much discussion ensued between the public and the Board around portions of the sign being removed, the entire sign be removed, and new locations for the sign.

Van Nort reminded the audience that we are currently talking about Item #6, removing the top sand blasted portions.

Pat Gillula: What does the lighted sign looks like during the day? Can you read it? Van Nort said yes. She talked about LED bulbs of different strengths and stated those on the current sign where glaring. She liked the idea of the sign but would like to see it less bright.

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Barb Smith: We talked about this a year ago and Bonnie said we can make the sign do anything. Laureto explained that smaller pixels will give a better image. The sign can be programmed in many ways, but it all comes down to pixel size. Larger pixels are used more frequently in commercial signs.

Houtteman described some of the work of the CAC and said the Board is going to defer to their recommendations instead of beginning the process all over again.

**Motion Van Nort, support Laureto that we authorize Lee to explore removing the top portions of the sign and installing them elsewhere and to bring the information back to the board for approval.**

Board Discussion: Lewis shared his views on the sign which involved immediate removal while we explored the options. Much public discussion regarding removal ensued.

Charlie Wallace: Proposed the board to make Action Item #6 the immediate removal of the sign.

Public: This has been going on since last summer and nothing has happened. Lewis said that was not true. The Board had a public meeting and it was agreed to make the sign go black and it's stayed black. In the meantime, many people have been logging up many hours working on the issue.

Pat Gillula: Why does it take so long to decide? Lewis explained the process. The decision was made to put out a survey with the tax bill to give all a chance to express their opinion and there was a reasonable number returned. Peter read them all and they were analyzed. A committee was established to make recommendations, and everybody is trying to do the right things to turn this issue around. Lewis said he is excited and optimistic about what will unfold over the next year. Van Nort said the committee was deliberately staffed with people that felt the sign should be removed but after working through the issue the committee is now unanimous that the electronic portion of the sign should stay. We need to move forward in a disciplined approach. Houtteman said you need to respect that 61% of the survey respondents said the electronic sign is relevant so many people are in favor of it.

Barb Smith: If 61% of the people say they want the sign could it be moved somewhere else. Van Nort said the survey did not ask that but another location could be looked at.

Charlie Wallace: Referred to the minutes of the May 8 working meeting and asked about the sign meeting the zoning ordinance. Van Nort said it is the board's intent to comply with the zoning ordinance.

John Volk: Suggested that the board publish, perhaps in the newspaper, exactly what work has been going on so that people don't feel like things are at a standstill.

Linda Peppler: Said this was a capital improvement and so why didn't the Board ask the taxpayers if they wanted a sign? Lewis said the size of the cost determines this, garden and park improvement, sidewalks, etc. are much bigger expenses. He pointed out that the sign discussions started several years ago, and many meetings were open for public comment.

Public: Because many people will be arriving back it will be important for them to know that something is being done and the issue is still under advisement. She supported removing and storing the sign until its determined what we are going to do.

Linda Peppler: We should print an article in the enterprise stating there has been a meeting and there is on-going discussion about the sign. State what all the options are so that people know. Let people know we are doing something.

Laureto commented that there is a motion on the floor to allow Lee to explore removing the top portion. Laureto further commented that removing the tops is an easy thing to do, that Lee has already done a lot

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of the research on the issue, and that it seems like something we could finish relatively quickly. If we could make a decision about the tops at next week's board meeting then action could be taken and people could see that something is being done. It would not be as drastic as taking it down and putting it up again, but it would show some progress.

Sharon Doyle: Did the committee decide the most offensive part of the sign is the tops? Lewis it was a part of their total recommendations.

Pat Gillula: Give the public information about the fact that the size is too big and that it's going to be smaller.

Laureto called the question and read the motion. **Motion Van Nort, second Laureto that we authorize Lee to explore removing the top portions of the sign and installing them elsewhere and to bring the information back to the board for approval. Motion carried.**

**Action Item #7:** Van Nort read the action item: "To authorize Lee to explore with D & D Signs, switching out the LED portion of the sign for less square footage and smaller pixels and bring a recommendation to the Board for approval. Van Nort stated that this would bring the sign into zoning requirements.

**Houtteman moved and Peppler supported that we move forward with action item #7 as read by the supervisor.**

Public Comment:

Linda Peppler: What do you mean when you use the word "Explore"? Van Nort explained we need to explore costs, timeframe, location, and information about the changeout. Discussion ensued. **Van Nort withdrew and restated the motion: "To authorize Lee to develop costs with D & D Signs of switching out, relocating, and removing the LED portion of the sign to bring the sign into compliance with zoning requirements and to develop a recommendation on smaller pixels. Motion carried.**

**Action Item #8: Motion Van Nort, support by Lewis that we investigate the actions required to properly display the flag in accordance with the rules published by Congress. Motion Carried.**

Public Comments:

Mimi Gass: At last summers meeting the word most often used in regards to the sign was "eyesore", so whatever does happen with the sign it should not be an eyesore.

Charlie Wallace: Thank you for a good discussion. You did a good job. Support by several audience members.

Barb Smith: We got to where we needed to.

The supervisor declared the meeting adjourned at 11:20 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Laureto  
Township Clerk