

GLEN ARBOR TOWNSHIP
P.O. Box 276 Glen Arbor, MI 49636
231-334-3539 FAX 231-334-6370

Peter Van Nort, Supervisor

John Pepler, Trustee

Bonnie Quick, Clerk

Don Lewis, Trustee

Terry J Gretzema, Treasurer

Special Board Meeting

August 30, 2018 Minutes

Meeting was recorded

Roll Call was called at 4:00 PM by Supervisor Van Nort in the Glen Arbor Town Hall gym. All Board members were present. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The Special Board meeting was called to order at 4:06 PM.

The agenda was presented – the meeting will be regarding the new sign. Van Nort then opened the floor for public comment.

Public Comment/Discussion of Sign –

Charlie Patton – 6600 S. Dunns Farm – During the meeting last week, he talked about the community. There were comments last week about how cute and quaint the community is, and in reading the Glen Arbor Sun, he read that the cuteness and quaintness were found to be a laughing matter by a member of the board. In addition, there was a comment in the article by Zoning Administrator Tim Cypher stating that governmental entities do not have to follow the Zoning Ordinance. He would like an explanation of this from the board, and either a retraction or a comment from the board member who found it funny to think that Glen Arbor was cute and quaint. Glen Arbor has had its ups and downs, but it is still a cute and quaint community.

Diane Hamilton – 7923 Day Forest Road – Regarding the sign not having to comply with the Zoning Ordinance because it is a government building; this is not a sign labeling a government structure, but a sign being used to advertise community events. Even if there is such a rule that government building signs don't have to comply with the Zoning Ordinance, this sign should not fall into that exemption.

Patricia Widmeyer – Glen Arbor B&B – She and her husband own the B&B. They are involved in a number of community events, and she wishes to express support for the digital sign. The previous sign was very difficult to use, and made it difficult to advertise as many events as there are in Glen Arbor. The question is not the sign itself, but how to best communicate events and meetings to the public. In all likelihood, the people here tonight knew about the meeting because they saw it on the sign, and otherwise it may not have been communicated to the public in a manner that they would have seen. There needs to be a better way to learn about events and meetings, besides having to read every line in the Leelanau Enterprise. She urges the board to consider what modifications could be made, that would allow better communication with the public.

John Walsh – 6006 Forest Haven Drive – He wants to echo the need to focus on how to better communication, rather than focusing on the sign. If a sign is necessary, there may be a better location.

Jerry Morowski – Day Forest Road – Asked for a clarification about the ineffectiveness of the old sign?

Eric Winkelman – 47 Sunset Shores Dr – Glen Arbor has changed since he bought property here in the mid-1980s. The roads have changed and improved, and parking lots have improved, it was named the Most Beautiful Place in America. Glen Arbor isn't cute until late fall, and then the cuteness dissipates again the next spring when the tourists arrive again. When he first saw the sign,

GLEN ARBOR TOWNSHIP
P.O. Box 276 Glen Arbor, MI 49636
231-334-3539 FAX 231-334-6370

Peter Van Nort, Supervisor

John Pepler, Trustee

Bonnie Quick, Clerk

Don Lewis, Trustee

Terry J Gretzema, Treasurer

it looked like a marquee sign. However, with the number of groups and events, Glen Arbor is over-programmed, and there needs to be a way to let the public know about all of this. He saw the notice of this meeting on the sign, as well as on the hall door when he came in. The town needs to both service the needs of the large summer community and maintain its small town feels, and that's not easy to do. It's possible, but will take work.

Jeff Hamilton – 7923 Day Forest Road – He agrees with the previous comment, that balance is difficult. However, there are also things that are significant changes to the character of the community. There are some small towns near national parks in the country that have made bad choices, such as Gatlinburg, TN. He appreciates the work the board does to balance the needs of the businesses, locals, and tourists, but the sign is a step in a dangerous direction. Additional signs like this would fundamentally change the way the town looks. Even with new roads and lots of tourists, the town still looks like Glen Arbor, but it doesn't need the electronic signs. Specifically regarding the sign, especially the need to communicate – the board needs to ask what needs to be communicated, by whom, and how best that can be done. It seems like a lot of things that need to be communicated should be better communicated by the Chamber of Commerce, and in a way that is not a blaring, lighted sign. He appreciates that the board is holding another meeting on this topic, and hopes that the conclusion is that the sign is wrong for the town and that it should be taken down. After this, a group should get together and figure out how to best communicate while preserving the town.

Cheryl Morley – 4727 Northwood Drive – She agrees with Hamilton. The board needs to consider the safety aspects. Cars are stopping in the street to read the sign, because it's so distracting. That is a busy road. In addition, best practice research will show towns, larger than Glen Arbor but still beautiful, that don't allow LED signs but still communicate very well all the time. There are better ways to communicate than a flashing LED sign.

Sharon Doyle – 4445 W. Glen Eden Road – She agrees with Hamilton. One of the major things in Glen Arbor is the tree lighting on Thanksgiving weekend, and she can't imagine caroling in front of the town hall with the sign present. The town hall represents a lot of things and events in the community, many of which are emotional, and the sign takes away from the charm of the location.

Barb Smith – 4515 Glen Eden – She asked if the board as a government agency is allowed to put up the sign, how many other businesses are going to want one, and how many flashing LED signs are there going to be along the street?

Bob Jones – 6509 SW Glen Lake Road – He wants to be on record as opposing the sign, for all of the reasons previously stated.

Gail Webster – 7176 Arbor Pines – She asked about procedure: what is this meeting for? The board has not responded to the questions so far, regarding the old sign or the article. Is this a duplication of the meeting two weeks ago? (Van Nort responded that this meeting is for the board to discuss the information they have received at the meeting two weeks ago and reach a conclusion about how to proceed.)

John Walsh – He wanted to emphasize the communication aspect. There are two different audiences – the residents and long-term tourists, and those just passing through. If he didn't know what was going on, the first place he would go would be the web pages for the town or chamber of commerce, or he would look for informational kiosks. There should be an e-mail list to get event notifications. There are ways other than the sign to get information out.

Jan Semple – 6002 Oak Street – She read a note on behalf of her husband, Dan. He stated that he was critical of the sign at the monthly meeting. He would like to follow up with a proposal that may

GLEN ARBOR TOWNSHIP
P.O. Box 276 Glen Arbor, MI 49636
231-334-3539 FAX 231-334-6370

Peter Van Nort, Supervisor

Bonnie Quick, Clerk

Terry J Gretzema, Treasurer

John Pepler, Trustee

Don Lewis, Trustee

meet the needs of the township and community. He proposes that the township oversee and help develop new informational kiosks for pedestrian use. He would like these kiosks to be paid for by the township, with information and support provided by the chamber, art association, park service, and others. These kiosks would improve communication while negating the need for a changeable sign (either the old or new signs) at the township hall. He appreciates that the township board is open to amending their actions on the sign issue, and is willing to help make progress. Jan Semple's comment is that when the township park was developed, local people were involved. The same process should have been followed during the conception of the sign. Communication is needed, but it needs to be done the right way. This can be started by properly identifying who the township is looking to communicate with.

Cindy Hartman – 7684 W. Harbor Hwy – She agrees with what Dan Semple wrote.

Charlie Wallace – 6752 Dunns Farm – He asked whether the public would get answers to the questions that were asked during public comment tonight. (Van Nort replied that he felt it better if the board discussed these issues first – some of the answers will likely come from the board discussion.)

Board Discussion

Van Nort opened the discussion to the board. The board briefly discussed the procedure for the meeting tonight. Following the standard meeting format, there was an opportunity for public comment, then the board will have discussion on the matter at hand, and at the end there will be another opportunity for public comment. The board may or may not answer specific questions raised by the public. The board is meeting tonight, as quickly as possible, to discuss the issues of communication in general and the sign specifically. Prior to tonight, Van Nort had asked the other board members to e-mail him with their personal opinions and suggestions on these issues. Van Nort has collated the comments that were sent to him, and they will now be discussing this list. Lewis asked the public for some patience on the issue, as they discuss the issues and deliberate on what the best outcome is.

It was suggested to rectify the shortcomings of the website. Gretzma stated that there are four parts or possibilities of addressing the sign issue: sign management (type of messages, color, going dark if there is nothing important to report), sign appearance (size and landscaping), appointment of representative subcommittee to look at sign as a whole (including location and need) with the possibility of polling the local property owners regarding their opinion, and finally the board decision on the sign. Lewis stated that in his view, there are two main issues: to determine the need/desire for a modern informational sign in Glen Arbor, and, if a sign is desired, to determine the best, safest location for that sign. If a sign is needed/wanted, a study should be done to see what the best sign management practices are and, costs should be appropriate and determined to be what is best for the community. If the sign is to be removed, there are also options – removing it in its entirety, removing pieces, trying to sell what is removed, relocating the top portion of the sign, relocating the whole sign, etc. If a sign is kept at the town hall, the aesthetics need to be considered. It does seem to be necessary to form a subcommittee with a cross section of the community represented.

Peppler stated that there are three options: remove it, replace it, or reconfigure it. A subcommittee seems necessary. Quick thinks the sign can serve a good purpose, but there need to be some changes and some more involvement from the public. Gretzma stated that there are a lot of groups

asking the township to help them advertise their events, especially those held at the town hall. The township did not place this sign just to help the township – it was mainly done to notify the whole community of all of the fundraisers, events and activities that take place in the building. The execution of the sign may not have been what everyone would wish, but the good intent was there.

GLEN ARBOR TOWNSHIP
P.O. Box 276 Glen Arbor, MI 49636
231-334-3539 FAX 231-334-6370

Peter Van Nort, Supervisor

John Pepler, Trustee

Bonnie Quick, Clerk

Don Lewis, Trustee

Terry J Gretzema, Treasurer

The board briefly discussed sign management. It was determined to decide whether the sign should be kept, removed, modified, or moved first. The subcommittee could be useful for this. The board discussed the idea of a subcommittee, including the composition and size.

Gretzema moved, Lewis seconded to direct the supervisor to oversee the appointment of a subcommittee of five members, including a liaison with the Township Board. All in favor, motion carried.

The board further discussed the composition of the committee. The Chamber of Commerce, the Glen Arbor and Glen Lake Womens' Clubs, and the Arts Association were mentioned as groups that could contribute a member. Dan Semple was mentioned as another potential member. The public asked whether the committee meetings would be open to the public, and contributed suggestions for who could be on the committee. The board agreed that the committee should represent a cross-section of the community.

Gretzema amended his previous motion to create a subcommittee with nine members, five community members at large and four members from service organizations in the community. The township board member will be a liaison, not a committee member. Lewis seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

The subcommittee will meet, and make a recommendation to the board. The board will then make the final decision on the sign.

Public Comment –

John Walsh – The supervisor should seek out people with a communications and technology background for the committee. People are needed with expertise, and not just opinions.

Kenna MacDonald – Fisher Road – The Park was done fabulously and kept the feeling of the town. May be good to get someone from that group to participate in this committee.

The board and public discussed the ineffectiveness of the old sign. Patricia Widmyer spoke on how difficult and dysfunctional the old sign was to use, as it took a substantial amount of time to set up – 2 hours in cold weather for the holiday marketplace. It was difficult and labor intensive to use the old sign. The difficult nature of its use made it used for fewer events than it could have been, and it was hard to find volunteers to move the sign up front and place the letters. Widmyer hopes this will be taken into account in the sign conversation.

Charlie Patton – He mentioned two places where the electronic portions of the sign could be moved to, if they were moved from the town hall. These could still be programmed from the town hall office, due to the wi-fi capability of the sign. The sign doesn't need to be destroyed, just the parts moved. The top portions could be used as "Welcome to Glen Arbor" signs at entrances to the village. The publication on the website of the minutes needs to be improved. There was no publication notice of this meeting on the website either. This year is in its ninth month, and there are no minutes from 2018 on the website.

Cookie Thatcher – 5777 Lake Street – Keeping the signs, no matter where they are, is still encouraging other businesses to get similar signs. It is setting a bad precedent. This type of sign is not appropriate, and is unnecessary with the proliferation of personal electronic devices on which people can get information. The township website should be utilized better, and linked with the Chamber of Commerce website.

The board discussed the website briefly. Work needs to be done on it.

GLEN ARBOR TOWNSHIP
P.O. Box 276 Glen Arbor, MI 49636
231-334-3539 FAX 231-334-6370

Peter Van Nort, Supervisor

John Pepler, Trustee

Bonnie Quick, Clerk

Don Lewis, Trustee

Terry J Gretzema, Treasurer

Unidentified – Asked whether there was a prohibition on lighted signs in the sign ordinance. The township replied that there is no prohibition on lighted signs, but there are prohibitions against flashing/moving signs. Electronic signs are not prohibited. The board and public discussed the size of the township sign. The current sign is smaller than old sign.

Nancy Mueller – 7680 West Deer Trail – She asked if there was a web designer on retainer with the township. (Board replied yes.) How long have they been working with the township? (Board replied just a few weeks, maybe four or six. There was previously someone working on the website that turned out to be not effective, and so a change was made recently. The website is still in a transition process.) All of the information for meetings/events should be on the website, which would save everyone time, and get rid of the need for signs. (The board stated that the website does need to be fixed.)

Andy Dotterweich – 6200 S. Glen Lake Rd – Even for reconfiguring, the sign would need to be taken down and then put back up. The board should consider taking the sign down now and storing it until a decision has been made.

Gretzema moved, Pepler seconded to approve the audit as final and ready for printing. All in favor, motion carried.

Quick moved, Gretzema seconded to raise the limit at which an item is determined to be a capital asset from \$1,000 to \$5,000, per the auditor's recommendation. All in favor, motion carried.

Public Comment

Sharon Dozal – 4945 Glen Eden Drive – She'd like to see what the township board's vote would be on shutting off the sign or taking it down until a decision is made. (The board stated that there are options, including going dark. It would be a big expense to remove it and then replace it if that was the decision that was made.)

Cookie Thatcher – Is the township board prepared for every business in this town to have a sign like that? If not, the township board needs to take the lead on this and not have a sign of this magnitude. She would like to at least see the sign go dark until a decision is made.

Larry Widmeyer – He would like to suggest keeping the sign running while the committee meets. He is on the chamber board, and they appreciate their events getting the exposure of the sign. He would like to public who aren't at the meeting (and no-one knows their opinion) to be able to see the sign, while the committee does its work. Going dark defeats the purpose of having a real public evaluation of the sign.

Eric Winkelman – He would like the committee meetings to be open to the public and allow public input. (The board replied that they would.) He stated that nothing will be settled today and encouraged the public to attend the committee meetings and give their input.

Charlie Patton – There is a time to admit when mistakes were made, absorb the costs, and placate the community. The members of the community are who pay the taxes and vote for the board, who initiate a new fire hall, and all the other community activities. A large community that is against the actions of the board, then the future of the township is not going to go forward, it will stay stagnant, because the community will constantly question what happened, why it happened, etc. It is important to notify, to listen, and then to make judgments on purchases.

GLEN ARBOR TOWNSHIP
P.O. Box 276 Glen Arbor, MI 49636
231-334-3539 FAX 231-334-6370

Peter Van Nort, Supervisor

Bonnie Quick, Clerk

Terry J Gretzema, Treasurer

John Pepler, Trustee

Don Lewis, Trustee

Mike Hasselback – 5868 S. Dunns Farm Rd – At the last meeting, he asked whether the board had the same negative reaction as much of the community did upon seeing the sign for the first time. He asked if the board knew what the design was going to look like before it was installed or if they gave the design company a concept and were as shocked as the community when it went up. (Board replied that they were intimately involved with the design and not shocked at installation.)

Bob Jones – How much revenue does a sign of this size create for Glen Arbor? Glen Arbor is not hurting for revenue or tourists, and he doesn't see the need for more advertising. Every time he gets online he sees more articles listing Glen Arbor as a top destination, and he is concerned about whether Glen Arbor actually needs more revenue and how much revenue this sign would create.

John Walsh – 6006 Forest Haven – He supports the idea of shutting the sign off until the committee has met. If there is so much support for the sign, those people should have showed up at meetings.

The board briefly discussed the sign and whether it should be shut off. Lewis stated that he would not vote today for the design and location of the sign; he apologized for the situation.

Lewis moved, Pepler seconded to shut off the sign at the end of the current advertisement, which ends on 8/31. All in favor, motion carried.

Board Member Comments –

While the public here is mainly opposed, they represent only a small percentage of the property owners in the township. In the end, if there is a major decision to be made, the board will try to poll the entire township population.

Quick stated that she voted for the motion to have the sign go dark, but she is disappointed that groups such as the Chamber of Commerce may not be able to have their events published on the sign. She would like to see the holiday marketplace and pumpkin festival back on the sign, if a conclusion to the matter is reached before those events.

The public asked to have more communication regarding township events on the websites for both the Chamber and Township.

Supervisor Comments – Van Nort thanked everyone for coming.

Meeting adjourned – 5:31 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Nash
Glen Arbor Township Deputy Clerk