

GLEN ARBOR TOWNSHIP

ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021

The year 2020-2021 was marked by the COVID-19 Pandemic. In addition to dealing with the challenges of the Pandemic the Township Board has been involved in numerous activities each focused on enhancing the overall quality of life for Glen Arbor landowners, residents, and visitors. The purpose of this annual report is to keep our community up to date on happenings within the township over the last fiscal year. It has been a pleasure for the Board to serve the Township over the last year. What follows is a brief report on some of our activities and decisions:

1. TOWN BOARD. Although appointed in 2019, Clerk Pam Laureto and Treasurer Lee Houtteman each ran uncontested and were elected to their first four-year term in November. Trustees Don Lewis and John Pepler were each reelected. Peter Van Nort chose not to run for reelection and Tom Laureto was elected Supervisor. The Township Board is grateful for Peter's many years of public service and his four-year tenure as supervisor.

2. INFRASTRUCTURE. The Township worked with the Department of Energy, Great Lakes, and Environment (EGLE) and the Leelanau Conservation District to obtain permits allowing us to continue installing the Lake Street Boat Ramp on a yearly basis. In addition, needed repairs were made to the boat ramp.

We contracted with Glen Arbor Outdoor to replace several sections of sidewalk and to repair the drop ceiling in the Township Hall where several sections had broken loose.

In addition to standard preventative maintenance at the Township Hall, electrical work was done on the lift pump, the pressure switch on the water heater was replaced, a bath fan was replaced, and the office chairs and carpets were cleaned. Our biggest project was repairs to the garage where a critter proof skirt was added to the base and the building and trim were painted. At the Glen Arbor Garden, a heater was replaced in the men's restroom.

The Township Board, with financial support from TART Trails, contracted with Prien and Newhof, an engineering firms out of Grand Rapids to complete a preliminary trail design. The trail is proposed to link the Forest Haven and Homestead endpoints of the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail and will provide a safer passage for bicyclists and pedestrians along M-22. A Public Hearing will be set for 50% design completion which will allow suggestions from the public to be incorporated into the design. We anticipate the public hearing will take place in late spring, 2021.

3. GLEN ARBOR PARK. The August 2020 ballot proposal to change the elected Park Commission to an appointed Park Board passed with a 69% majority. The Township Board thanks all those who served on the Park Commission for their years of service and the wonderful Township Park that their vision helped to create.

The Township Board adopted an Ordinance to establish the Park and Recreation Board and also adopted Park and Recreation Board Bylaws. Three of the former commissioners have agreed to serve on the new Park and Recreation Board. There are openings for two additional Park and Recreation Board members and numerous opportunities for those willing to serve on citizen committees. Contact the Township Office if you are willing to serve in some capacity.

COVID-19 led to all the usual activities at the Park were canceled and the equipment and courts being closed for the first half of the summer. Courts and equipment were eventually opened with signage encouraging distancing and masks.

New wind screens for two of the tennis courts and an equipment storage shed were purchased for the park.

With the mild winter it was not uncommon to see folks playing pickleball and some hardy folks even shoveled the courts in order to play.

4. TOWNSHIP HALL. COVID-19 also meant that all rentals of the Township Hall and meeting room were canceled. We are just now beginning to book weddings and other rentals for 2022 and hope that the few weddings scheduled for this summer will not have to be canceled although all have been reduced in numbers of attendees. Pickleball, fitness classes, and youth basketball returned to the Hall this spring following MDHHS guidelines.

The Township has worked hard over the last year to follow the ever-changing executive and MDHHS orders. The Office has been closed to walk-ins since March 2020 although the Clerk and Supervisor have been available in the office to assist the public with voter registration, notarizations, receipt of building permit and other applications, and receipt of tax payments among other essential business. The Township Treasurer and Assessor have been available by phone with each returning calls in a timely manner.

5. ASSESSOR. All Board of Review members successfully completed their State required training and the December and March Boards of Review were held via ZOOM. A new 5-year contract was signed with our assessors Tim and Polly Cairns. The following was submitted by our assessors for this report.

“During the township’s fiscal year, real estate values continued an upward trend. Evidence of the fastest upward acceleration of real estate values since 2006 exists locally, regionally, and nationally. Factors driving upward pressure on value include record low interest rates, shortage of inventory, and high costs of new construction. Additionally, COVID appears to have accelerated the already growing

demand for rural real estate. Adding complexity and suggesting long-term value trends, even in the most crowded cities, residential rental buildings, despite having lower current rental rates, can be found to sell at amounts greater than the income approach to value supports. Locally, lifelong intrinsic benefits of geography and heritage transcend decadal market trends. With our work product, we strive to yield deference to property owners and visitors and encourage volunteerism to support the many committees working to preserve and improve the Glen Arbor experience.”

6. PLANNING AND ZONING. The planning commission has continued its work on reviewing and editing conflicting language within the zoning ordinance although COVID-19 prevented in-person meetings and slowed work on the project.

In the last year the township’s Zoning Administrator, Tim Cypher, issued 37 land use permits, 1 land division, 2 property line adjustments, 2 special land use permits. In addition, ZA Cypher investigated and resolved 2 zoning violations, made 89 construction inspections, and supplied information to 564 township residents and others via phone and email. There were no Zoning Board of Appeals proceedings in FY 20-21. The Planning Commission recommended the rezoning of 1 property and the Township Board approved the rezoning request.

7. GLEN LAKE FIRE DEPARTMENT. The fire department had to overcome many hurdles in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They implemented several new COVID guidelines in conjunction with guidelines outlined by the MDHHS. In March 2020, the department, along with other departments in Leelanau County, assigned two ambulances for COVID or suspected COVID patients only. One of those was stationed in Glen Arbor and the other in Leland. Temporary living quarters were built in the classroom at the Glen Arbor Station to allow for social distancing while also providing a sleeping area for personnel working on the COVID ambulance. We were fortunate to not have any member of the department get sick with COVID. Most of the department’s employees have received their COVID vaccines.

The department requested and received from the C.A.R.E.S. Act about \$107,000 in reimbursements to cover COVID-19 related costs.

Below are highlights of the GLFD activities for the year:

- The Department responded to 575 incidents
- One full-time member of the department retired in December 2020 after being with the department for 10 years as a Firefighter/Paramedic. The department is currently in the process of filling the vacant Firefighter/Paramedic position.
- A total of 3,569 training hours were completed by department members
- All employees participated in the departments physical fitness/wellness program with excellent results; every person showed improvement in their health and physical strength.

- Started a new vehicle maintenance program so that vehicle repairs and annual service is properly scheduled and recorded.
- A new ambulance was purchased.

8. GLEN LAKE LIBRARY. We are pleased to report that the library's new facility opened on September 8, 2020 and is the result of wide-spread community support. The new library is nearly 6000 square feet with plenty of room for books and media, reading and study areas, and an expanded young learner's section. The design is open and airy with expanded seating both indoors and outdoors. If you've not yet visited the new library facility, we encourage you to do so.

9. GLEN ARBOR'S FOREST HAVEN CEMETERY. Early in 2020 there was speculation that the historic Glen Arbor cemetery was owned by Glen Arbor Township and not by the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. This was confirmed through extensive title searches and then by attorneys of the United States Department of Interior.

The confusion of ownership came about when Pierce Stocking sold land on Forest Haven Drive to the Interior Department to be included in the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. However, the cemetery parcel was granted to Glen Arbor Township back in the early 1800's by Dr. Walker. Therefore, Mr. Stocking never held title to the cemetery property and Mr. Stocking's Estate could not grant this parcel of land to the Department of Interior.

The historical significance of the cemetery is that there are 4 Civil War Veterans and several long-time Glen Arbor citizens buried in the cemetery. The cemetery has been neglected for 50 plus years. Therefore, Glen Arbor Township plans for the cemetery, at this time, include an extensive clean-up of downed trees that remain from the August 2015 wind storm and the addition of a path off Forest Haven Drive for easy access to the cemetery.

The Township is grateful for the volunteer help with the title search and for local support for "reclaiming" this piece of significant historical value. Work will begin this Spring. If you would like to participate in the clean-up, please contact the Township office. Or, if you choose, donations for clean-up and maintenance of the cemetery property can be forwarded to the Glen Arbor Township office with a specific notation on the check for "Glen Arbor Township Cemetery Fund".

10. ELECTIONS. Two elections were conducted under COVID-19 precautions. Every precinct worker stepped up and contributed to a safe environment. Absent voter ballots increased from 188 in March 2020 to 316 in August and 547 in November. Voter turnout in November was very high with roughly 86% of registered Glen Arbor electors casting a ballot.

13. WEBSITE. The Township's new website, introduced in last year's annual report, has seen a significant increase in users. You can find Public Notices, meeting schedules, agendas, and minutes, activities at the Park, information on Township events, and more on our website. You can even pay your taxes on-line using Point-N-Pay or your credit card. Check out our website at <https://glenarbertownship.com/> or follow the Township on Facebook or Instagram.

14. COVID-19 Specifics. The Township placed COVID specific signage at the Township Garden and Park and the Glen Lake Chamber of Commerce placed sandwich boards around town reminding patrons to wear masks. Restroom cleaning at the Township Park and Garden was increased from once a day to twice a day and hand sanitizer was supplied to users of both the Park and Garden and also to those having business at the Township office.

Following recommendations put forth in the "Virtual Meeting Report" from the U of M COVID-19 Consulting Corps and Michigan Townships Association collaboration, Glen Arbor Township began using phone conferencing to hold public meetings as it met the two-way communication requirement of the OMA with the fewest technical barriers. We used FreeConferenceCall.com as it was highlighted in the report. Eventually we explored using ZOOM and learned that conferencing equipment was the best way to do that for public meetings. Equipment was purchased for our conference room and after a 2 month wait for delivery the Board moved to holding its meetings via ZOOM as permitted by MDHHS orders.

Leelanau County submitted a C.A.R.E.S. Act Community Development Block Grant which allowed the Township to submit a request for reimbursement for COVID-19 related expenses. The Township Clerk submitted a detailed request and provided copies of receipts. We recently received word that the Michigan Economic Development Corporation Committee has reviewed our request and approved \$25,109.98 in reimbursements which was the total amount requested. We are awaiting receipt of the funds. COVID-19 related expenses continue to be tracked in the event that another opportunity for reimbursement arises.

On Behalf of the Township Board,

Tom Laureto
Supervisor

Pam Laureto
Clerk