

# GLA Communications Committee 6-4-2015

This meeting summary is being distributed to the GLA Board and Community as a volunteer service by the GLFPC. We invite the GLA Board to make use of the following summary as a basis for their official GLA meeting minutes for the Communications Committee Meeting held on Thursday June 4, 2015. If the GLA Board does make official record of meeting minutes from this meeting, we would kindly request to receive an email copy of those official meeting minutes, when they are completed. Respectfully, the GLFPC.

A two-hour phone conference meeting of the GLA Communications Committee held Thursday, June 4, 2015, focused on two questions. The first was about meeting minutes: what is the appropriate content, level of detail, and delivery time for them? (Note: approved minutes are currently available to landowners about two months after the meeting.) The second question was about email: when and how the GLA should begin using email to give official meeting notices? (Note: the GLA Bylaws were amended about a year ago to allow email to be used as an official way to give meeting notice.)

Robert Branson, Chairman of the Communications Committee, opened the meeting by reminding everyone that the committee has a goal of open and creative flow of information.

Citing the eight pages of single-spaced typing used to present minutes of a recent GLA Board meeting, committee member Rudy Parker said he was baffled by both the length and detail of those minutes.

Volunteer Secretary Alyssa Allen explained that the minutes have been getting longer because there is more landowner input at the meetings and because committee meeting reports are now being incorporated into the official GLA Board minutes. She also reminded the committee that the GLA has been sued over its minutes, and that per legal advice the minutes need to include reasonable detail and discussion points along with the recording of attendance, motion and actions.

“Including so many little details is just too much work,” countered Rudy Parker. “They serve no important purpose. I am absolutely against them”.

“The purpose of the details is to keep us from being sued, so I am for them,” reflected Board Vice-President and committee member Ross Brunson. “Our lawsuit atmosphere means we have to deal with details.”

Board President and committee member Dan Kehoe said we are tackling big issues and that this flurry of paper is about “battening down the hatches” until such time that we can slim down again. He suggested that GLA could get to the point of having quarterly Board

meetings and more frequent committee meetings. Committees would in turn be responsible for keeping their own minutes and could hold meetings by phone.

No action was taken on the question of whether GLA's paid Administrative Assistant or GLA's volunteer Secretary should record the minutes, given the time and record keeping needed for accurate minutes. Hearing from a landowner that the minutes would be more valuable if they were fresher led the committee to consider holding a phone conference meeting to approve the minutes and have them available to landowners possibly within two weeks of the meeting.

Learning that Karleen McSherry could not guarantee a delivery schedule for the minutes, given that she is already working extra hours each week and has a lot on her plate, no action was taken on making minutes available sooner. Karleen McSherry added that the minutes are sometimes ready just days before the next monthly meeting because other GLA business including Project Reviews takes precedence over the minutes at this time.

Ross Brunson suggested that if the budget allowed more paid hours for Karleen McSherry, it might be possible get the minutes out sooner. In response, Rudy Parker said several times it is more important to use our money for roads, not more administration.

Board President Dan Kehoe, citing a Utah source, said that another way to look at minutes is that they should not open a group to liability or potential defamation of character, and that the minutes need only reflect attendance, votes and decisions, not discussion.

In the end there was a committee consensus to seek additional legal advice about minutes and no consensus, as requested by Rudy Parker, that the minutes be shorter.

Parker also said that it could be good if there were volunteer bloggers or volunteer journalists to help inform landowners of GLA happenings, but Ross Brunson countered, "I don't want to be mentioned in lively reports. If the meeting summaries from the Glastonbury Landowners for Positive Change (GLFPC) continue, we'll lose board members."

"When I am misconstrued by GLFPC," said Robert Branson, "they need to be held accountable."

According to Karleen McSherry, GLA's Administrative Assistant, "Official minutes are needed to combat GLFPC."

A landowner's suggestion that the recordings of the meetings could be kept and made available down the road if needed for clarification was viewed as giving the board too much vulnerability. Per current practice, GLA meeting recordings are not kept after the minutes are approved.

But as a landowner pointed out, retained recordings are a problem only when you are worried about the content. Ross Brunson clearly stated that he was not willing to be recorded forever. “It is a liability – they (the recordings) are raw footage and with editing, they become dangerous,” he said.

The question about email and how GLA might use email as an official meeting notice and for other landowner information generated discussion about “opt in” forms, the use of personal computers versus cloud storage of email lists, and how GLA should comply with all the spam laws.

A landowner’s offer to volunteer her time to develop and maintain email distribution lists for GLA was not accepted. Brunson claimed that if GLA email lists were stored on a personal computer, that information could become “subpoena-able” or needed for discovery.

Per Ross Brunson, “We are not a club. We must follow rules”. We have to have a way to identify email subscribers as GLA members, and we must provide a way for subscribers to unsubscribe. When pressed by a landowner to share his source for the rules, Ross said to look up Can-Spam laws. (Note: The CAN-SPAM Act of 2003, signed into law by President George W. Bush on December 16, 2003, establishes the United States’ first national standards for the sending of commercial e-mail and requires the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to enforce its provisions.)

When volunteer Secretary Alyssa Allen said she has email lists on her computer and that the re-send button is quick and easy to use when she sends out board meeting notices and agendas. Ross Brunson stated this is wrong. He said subscribers need a way to unsubscribe and that GLA needs to be more professional.

Ross Brunson also said that if Google Docs were used to store email subscriber lists this would violate GLA subscriber privacy because that give the full board access to all email lists. To counter that, a landowner replied that a release form could easily be added to the email opt-in form. Dan Kehoe suggested that Mail Chimp software is a free email service which the Board could approve for GLA use.

Calling software selection a technical decision, not a board decision, Ross Brunson said that he would have more info soon and could work with Rudy Parker and Dan Kehoe to test things. Then, noting that the meeting was twice as long as planned, the committee adjourned about 9 pm, with Rudy Parker committing to write the minutes for the meeting.

\*Readers: You may make your comments or observations below, or by email.