

GLA Communications Committee 10-15-2015

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Committee Chairman Robert Branson, committee member Dan Kehoe, administrative assistant Karleen McSherry and two landowners were present for the phone-in meeting of the Communications Committee held Thursday October 15, 2015.

Branson opened the meeting by suggesting a three point agenda:

First – Establish criteria to determine what landowner communications would be answered by GLA’s attorney or by the Board.

Second – Create procedure for landowner input, curtailing the perception that issues are left hanging.

Third – How the board can function outside of meetings without crossing the line of doing things behind closed doors.

Considering the first point, McSherry reported that in the first month of working with the new ticketing software, Freshdesk, there are 50 open tickets (unanswered letters or emails) and that prior to the “ticketing” system; there are 100 unanswered communications, some dating back to last spring. She said the issue is time, and that some kind of screening procedure is needed to deal with the growing workload of communicating with members.

McSherry explained that when email is sent to GLA’s regular info@glamt.org email address, each board member receives the email with the understanding that if, for example, the email addresses a road issue, the Road Committee will respond to the communication. The problem, said McSherry, is that there is no overall procedure to let her know if the Road Committee (or anyone else) actually followed up on the email so the “ticket” can be closed with the new computer software.

McSherry also noted that she is behind because the processing of the email opt-in forms that were recently mailed to the membership is time-consuming. Plus, it takes a lot of time, she said, to communicate with committee chairs.

It was decided that Branson would remind committee chairs that they need to “step up to the plate” and be more pro-active in responding to landowner correspondence, and follow up by communicating with McSherry when they do. Kehoe surmised that it may be necessary to give more board members access to Freshdesk by making them agents. Per the current software plan, there is no charge for the first three agents, but if more board

members are given agent status, there will be an additional monthly charge per agent for this service.

To focus on the agenda question of how to decide which correspondence goes directly to the attorney for an answer and which does not, by agreement the two committee members decided that when McSherry is not sure, she will send the correspondence to the Communications Committee, and if they are unsure, they will send it to the Legal Committee, and in turn, the Legal Committee will send it to the attorney.

To address the second agenda item, namely how to shift the perceptions that there are loose ends during and after Landowner Input periods at meetings, McSherry, after being asked by Branson, said it would be helpful to adopt a procedure whereby someone on the board repeats back what the landowner said to make sure the landowner was heard correctly. And then, someone on the board should clearly state what will or can be done, either now or in the near future, to deal with the matter. McSherry also noted there is the problem of over-talk, which creates confusion among the listeners, plus it interrupts, disturbs and distracts the speaker.

When asked for input by Branson, the two present landowners voiced that there be more time during monthly GLA Board Meetings for communication between landowners and board members, noting the three-minute limit is inadequate. It was proposed by one landowner that there be regular community gatherings. Board members could attend, not in their official capacity as directors, but as fellow landowners, where all would listen and relate in a relaxed and friendlier way. Branson then made a direct request of this landowner to bring the community gathering idea to the floor at the Annual Meeting in November.

Kehoe noted that there could be more landowner input at committee meetings, instead of just at board meetings. He also cautioned that the directors must be extremely clear in all of their communications “with landowners”.

In discussion about the last agenda item – namely, how can board members communicate among themselves outside of meetings, but not cross over the line of having closed meetings (which is in violation of the governing documents) or of doing things behind someone’s back. Branson and Kehoe decided that if the emails deal with administrative business, such as how to work with Freshdesk, those emails would be okay. As for other matters, the committee thought it best to double-check everything with the attorney. Otherwise, any other email exchanges between board members, outside of regular board meetings, could actually be considered a closed meeting.