

Glastonbury Landowners Association

Newsletter ❧ January 2015

Annual Meeting & Elections Update

Our November 8, 2014 Annual Meeting and Elections was well attended. We offer our sincere appreciation and thanks to all of the board members and numerous volunteers for their hard work and community spirit!

We welcome the following directors and ombudsmen who were elected to serve two-year terms on the Glastonbury Board of Directors, and one-year terms for Ombudsmen:

<u>North Glastonbury</u>	<u>South Glastonbury</u>
Gerald Dubiel	Ed Dobrowski
Jim Kozlik	Catherine Bielitz Fitzgerald
Janice McCann	Dan Kehoe, Jr.

Specific voting results for directors are as follows:

SOUTH GLASTONBURY CANDIDATES

<u>Director</u>	<u>Votes</u>
Ed Dobrowski	48
Catherine Bielitz Fitzgerald	65
Dan Kehoe, Jr.	64
Dennis Riley (write-in)	1
Regina Wunsch (write-in)	1
Tim Brockett (write-in)	1

NORTH GLASTONBURY CANDIDATES

<u>Director</u>	<u>Votes</u>
Gerald Dubiel	59
Jim Kozlik	57
Janice McCann	76
Pouwel Gelderloos	50
Val O'Connell	7
Donna Anderson (write-in)	1
Peter Naclerio (write-in)	1

Elected Ombudsmen are:

SG: Miriam Barker: 57 (1 write-in vote)
NG: Mary Irwin 81 (5 votes for Daniel O'Connell)

These volunteer positions are a means for landowners to participate in bettering our community, and we thank all who ran for election and for their willingness to serve.

Ross Brunson, Paul Rantalo and Charlotte Mizzi from North Glastonbury; and Robert Branson and Robert Wallace from South Glastonbury are completing the remainder of their two-year terms. Scott McBride resigned at the end of December 2014 so he will not be completing his term.

Become an Agenda Subscriber

Would you like to know what the board is planning to discuss at its monthly meeting so you can attend to offer your wisdom on topics important to you? Become an agenda subscriber. Inform the board and you will receive notice by e-mail regarding meetings as well as date, time and venue changes.

Executive Officers / Committee Chairs

On December 8, the first board meeting after the Annual Meeting, the board elected the following directors to serve as executive officers:

President: Daniel Kehoe
Vice-President: Ross Brunson
Treasurer: Janice McCann
Secretary: Alyssa Allen (non-board member)

Chairs appointed for active committees are:

Budget – Janice McCann
Collections – Janice McCann
Communication – Robert Branson & Catherine Fitzgerald
Election – TBD
Governing Documents – TBD
Project Review – Gerald Dubiel
Road & Weed – Robert Wallace & Paul Rantalo
Website – Ross Brunson

Committee meetings are open for landowners to attend. Please visit the website calendar of events for committee meeting dates and times.

Thank you, Former Board Members

We wish to extend a heartfelt formal thank-you to our former board members Alyssa Allen, Laura Boise, Scott McBride and Sheridan Stenberg for their dedication and service to the community.

The loss of long-term servants equates to the loss of a certain amount of historical knowledge and experience. In order to ensure continuity, the board voted in Alyssa Allen as a non-board member GLA Secretary so that she may train the new administrative assistant and pass on information and duties, especially regarding past and present lawsuits.

New Administrative Assistant

After interviewing several well-qualified applicants, we welcome our new administrative assistant Karleen McSherry. Karleen comes to us with a background of more than 30 years of experience in for-profit and non-profit business administration. We are excited by the potential of what her expertise will bring to the community.

Bylaws Amendment Vote

On Saturday, November 8, 2014 during the Annual Meeting and Elections at Emigrant Hall, members voted on a proposed Amendment to the Bylaws that clarified the definition of "membership records." Passed by a vote of 98 "Yes" to 47 "No," the provision now more closely matches Montana law, which the Association is required to follow.

The GLA's Official website is: www.glamontana.org

GLA • PO Box 312 • Emigrant, Montana 59027 (406) 451-0033 • info@glamontana.org

Assessment Payment Policy

Assessments are to be paid in the following manner in order to be in strict compliance with the Covenants:

- 1) Paid in full by the end of January, or
- 2) Paid in equal quarterly payments by January 31 (or 15 days from the postmark), April 31, July 31, and October 31.

As stated in the Covenants, there is a 30-day grace period for payments, after which a 5 percent penalty and 1.5 percent monthly interest will begin to accrue.

You may view and download the Assessment Policy on the GLA website.

Assessments

After careful review of income and expenses, a draft budget for 2015 was constructed and presented to the board at the November 5, 2014 and January 19, 2015 board meetings. With a projected income of \$119,739 and projected expenses of \$130,207 the difference is a shortfall of \$10,468.

Nearly 72% of projected expenses are dedicated to road maintenance, including paying the principal and interest of the paving loan. Every year road expenses increase as the cost of materials and labor goes up. In 2010 the road budget was \$83,008. In 2015 projected road expenses will be \$94,870. The \$11,862 difference between 2010 and 2015 translates to about a 12.5% increase in road expenses.

Another way to look at the issue is to review the history of yearly assessments charged to landowners. From 1987 to 1997, residents paid their assessments to CUT, which maintained the roads with their staff and equipment. The cost during that time period was \$120 per lot and per dwelling.

The Glastonbury Landowners Association was incorporated on April 28, 1997 and it took on the responsibility for assessment collection along with related expenses. The GLA inherited a snowplow truck from CUT and maintained the roads by hiring independent contractors for grading and gravel, plowing and sanding. Assessments remained at \$120 per lot and per dwelling.

In 2001 the GLA took out a loan through the Bank of the Rockies to pave main roads in North Glastonbury and Dry Creek Road in South. Each subsequent year a portion of the budget has been put toward paying loan principal and interest. At that time there was no increase in assessments.

The first increase in assessments since 1987 came in 2005 when 10% was added and assessments totaled \$132 per lot and per dwelling. However, 18 years of stable fees and new expenses to maintain the paved portions of road caused the need for a series of assessment increases across several years. Fees went up 10% in each of 2007, 2008, 2009 (during which year the membership voted to approve money for the NG chip and seal project) and 2010. The current assessment of \$191 has been in place for the past five years.

If we look at the rate of inflation for the previous 27 years we see that what cost \$120 in 1987 would now cost \$249.46. The current assessment of \$191 comes in significantly short of that.

Board members are very aware of the economic challenges

of the times and will do everything in their power to collect past due fees. Besides the forecasted gap between income and expenses in the 2015 budget, the board also feels that the GLA is underfunded for road maintenance and snow removal, since we have had to use reserve funds to meet the current level of maintenance. With this in mind, the board approved at the January 19 meeting a 10% increase in assessments for 2015. A 2015 budget and profit/loss statement is being sent to members.

South Glastonbury Board Opening

Current board member, Scott McBride, has resigned effective December 31, 2014 because of increased work and family commitments. We are grateful for his many years of service on the board and his vast business experience that he shared.

The Board will be appointing a person to complete his term, which expires November 2015. SG landowners interested in serving on the board should address a letter of intention to the GLA. Candidates are encouraged to attend the February 9 board meeting.

2015 Board Meeting Schedule

Monthly meetings are held at St. John's Church in Emigrant and begin at 7:00 p.m. unless otherwise noted.

January 19	May 11	September 14
February 9	June 8	October 5
March 9	July 13	November 2
April 13	August 10	December 7
November 14 – Annual Meeting / Elections		

Please note that meeting times may be subject to change. Please check the GLA website or call the voicemail announcement service (451-0033) to confirm meeting dates.

Proposed New Policies

Enclosed are four new policies the board has developed and would appreciate receiving your input regarding these before implementing them. The proposed new policies are:

1. Conduct of Meeting Policy
2. Employee Hiring Policy
3. Record Retention Policy
4. Privacy Policy

Please review these policies and contact the board through the voicemail system, by e-mail, postal mail or by coming to the next monthly meeting to express your comments. Landowners have until the end of February to submit their input.

If you sell your property, please let us know!

When a property changes ownership, the GLA may or may not be aware of this. The GLA needs to be informed of the transfer of properties between owners so that the proper legal records are kept and financial statements and bills are sent to the correct landowner.

A "GLA Property Transfer Form" is available at the GLA website, www.glamontana.org, under the "current landowners"

tab, followed by “Realty Transfers” link. Feel free to call us at 406-451-0033, or e-mail us at info@glamontana.org to have the form sent to you. We greatly appreciate this courtesy.

Letter from the President

Many landowners have received communications over the last months from different landowner groups and have asked the GLA Board about this information. We are responding in hopes of clarifying the issues and answering landowners’ concerns.

As a board we believe that some of the communications in question convey a perspective of the community and the association that is not the whole picture nor helpful to our forward progress. From our standpoint, we welcome input from all members and consider all sides in making decisions. The board appreciates constructive criticism and strives to improve whenever possible. Despite our attempts to reach out, the majority of landowners do not respond, and yet the ones who do, seem to be critical of us no matter what.

Many of those who comment hold opposing views from each other. For instance, if we convene a meeting by phone to include landowners or Board members who cannot be physically present, we are criticized for not holding a physical meeting where eye contact and body language can be observed. On the other hand, if we hold a physical meeting, the Board is seen as unsympathetic for not making the meeting available to people who can’t be there physically, and for spending money to rent a hall.

Similar divisive attitudes exist with collecting past due assessments. The Covenants have an interest rate that is 18%, which courts won’t back because it’s too high. When we work with people to reduce the interest to something reasonable and closer to the level of inflation (which the Covenants allow for), the Board is praised by those who think the rate is unconscionable, and criticized and threatened with lawsuits by those who want every last penny of interest collected regardless of its level or enforceability.

What the Board asks is that we all try to understand the numerous sides of a situation and, when warranted, agree to cordially disagree – to keep inflammatory language out and not impugn negative motives when we look at and understand things differently. If you hear something that upsets you, please contact us so that there can be open communication and we can check out the facts.

In regards to the current lawsuit, the GLA posts the legal filings so everyone knows what the various sides are saying. Although they are legal documents, they are not hard to understand and they provide the best report to keep you up-to-date. We recommend that if you only have the time or patience to read one, read the August 4th GLA filing (#43 on the list).

The bottom line is that the Board seeks to balance contacting every landowner in a timely manner with news and information while keeping the communications within our limited budget. This is an ever-evolving process as we adapt to the different ways people are able to get their information (not everyone is on the Internet) as well as complying with the law and our Bylaws.

Thank you for your kind consideration of our request.

Winter Driving in Montana

Mountain terrain combined with snow and ice creates hazardous conditions for driving and requires extra alertness and good judgment in order to avoid accidents or becoming stranded. Slick roads require that we drive slowly and maintain a greater distance when following another vehicle. Sudden braking can cause skidding, which is why slower speeds are recommended, especially when we live in an area with deer and other wildlife crossing the roads.

Should you find yourself stuck in the snow, remember that it is often safer to stay in your car, call for assistance, and wait for help. Getting out of your car to attempt to dig yourself out in severe weather can quickly use up vital energy needed to stay alive. This also may create greater exposure to hypothermia or frostbite. Please consider what you would need to have in your car to ensure you could survive in this situation if it were extremely cold.

Snow-packed and icy roads are a part of winter in Montana. No matter where you live in Glastonbury, landowners should be prepared to put on tire chains, especially when driving on steep and/or curving roads.

Recommended to Have in Your Car

- Warm Hat and Extra Gloves & Liners
- Blanket or Sleeping Bag
- Extra Coat in Vehicle
- Small Shovel
- Flashlight and Flares
- Cell Phone
- Water Bottles
- Snacks for Energy
- Instant Hand and Feet Warmers (small packets)

Recommended to Have in Your Home

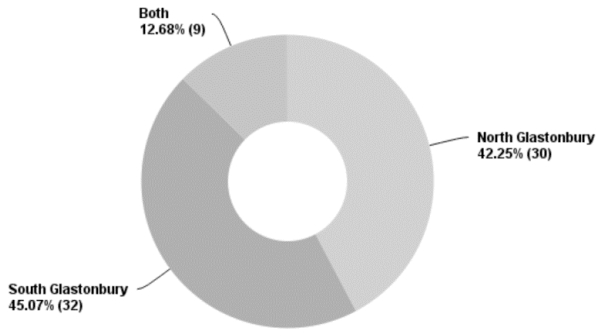
- At least one week of food and water
- Dry food that needs no electricity for preparation
- Large 5 gallon water bottles (during electric outage)
- Flashlights, candles, matches, and extra batteries
- Cell phone or land-line phone not requiring electricity
- Solar or propane stove for cooking/boiling water
- Solar or propane lantern and extra fuel
- Comprehensive first aid kit
- Short wave or CB radio
- Power generator and fuel

Landowner Survey

In October 2014, the GLA conducted an online survey of landowners. The questions were initially written by the Governing Documents Committee, and were edited and focused for ease in online answering by the Communications Committee.

The survey was conducted via SurveyMonkey.com and was comprised of 30 questions. Questions #1–2 were an authentication routine comprised of landowner’s lot number and unique serial number assigned confidentially to each landowner interest. Landowners who have multiple lots, aka “landowner interests” received multiple surveys individually serial-numbered for accuracy.

Over 400 notices were sent to landowners and 71 surveys were completed, which means that there was a 17% response rate. A full report of the exact survey results can be found on the GLA website. The following is a summary of the responses.



Demographic information regarding the respondents indicates that 56% are full-time residents, 89% have owned property in Glastonbury for five or more years, 76% own land with a residence, and approximately 65% live on a platted Glastonbury road. Approximately 45% own land in South Glastonbury, 42% in North and almost 13% own property in both. Most of the people (59%) own a single membership interest.

Survey results show that the main reason people own land in Glastonbury is because they want to live in Montana, in a beautiful rural area, near wilderness land and for the sense of peace and quiet. Very little interest was expressed in owning property to rent, for business or for being close to Bozeman.

The remaining questions relate to the GLA Association, its relationship with members and perceived responsibilities. Highest on the list of what respondents want the Association to do for them is to maintain the roads; collect past and present assessments; be financially responsible for collective monies; communicate with transparency and professionalism; and protect property values. Respondents do not see it as the Association's responsibility to organize social events; support infrastructure projects such as a community center, parks and trails or a shooting range; arbitrate disputes between neighbors, homeowners and businesses; or to enforce Covenants and restrictions by fines or fees.

Most of the respondents (87%) have read the association's governing documents and about 82% believe the GLA's involvement in their day-to-day life is just about right. Almost 50% of respondents think the GLA should accomplish its day-to-day administrative tasks through a combination of community volunteers and paid personnel with a local office but only 8% say they have the time and skills to volunteer on a consistent basis.

When asked if the Board should appoint a landowner committee that would be the first stage in dealing with issues and which would make recommendations to the Board, 52% preferred to retain the current committee structure, 27% expressed interest in an empowered landowner committee and 21% didn't prefer either of these options. Only 21% of respondents would like to participate as a member of a landowner committee.

With regard to the Covenants and Bylaws, there was strong

support for changing them for the various reasons cited: to reduce litigious vulnerability (75%); to clarify confusing or conflicting language (70%); identify and delete unenforceable language (69%); define or limit GLA oversight of small projects such as dog houses and small sheds (62%); and to comply with recommendations that organizations like the GLA be reviewed every ten years (61%). Only 8% didn't see a need for any changes or didn't prefer any of the answers.

Asked to comment on whether the association is too aggressive or not aggressive enough in enforcing current Covenants or restrictions, especially as it applies to eyesores, 48% agree with the current way Covenants are enforced; 45% would like to see a fining system for landowners who do not comply with restrictions; 38% prefer that the GLA conduct periodic visual inspections from the easement; 4% of the people want less enforcement and 10% would like to see enforcement to the letter of the law.

On the subject of protecting property values, 48% of respondents don't believe it is the GLA's primary responsibility, 38% do believe it is and 14% are undecided. Nonetheless, 86% of the people defined protecting property values as maintaining the road system. When asked if the GLA's primary responsibility is to maintain the roads 54% chose yes, 31% no and 14% were unsure. Asked if the GLA would best serve the community as a roads only association, a Rural Special Improvement District through Park County or by maintaining what currently exists, almost 50% of respondents oppose the Roads Only and RSID options while almost 30% preferred none of these choices. Given the option of switching to neighborhood associations and making the GLA a roads and common-space-only association, 77% of respondents voted no, 5% yes, and 17% were unsure.

Regarding assessments, the question of whether there is support to increase them in certain circumstances was asked and participants could choose all that applied. In general people believe assessments should be raised to keep up with inflation (40%); to improve the roads (37%); only after delinquent accounts are brought current (34%); and to more actively enforce the Covenants (21%). A small portion doesn't want the assessments raised for any reason (14%) and none of the answers suited 6%.

To collect delinquent accounts, 75% of respondents prefer the GLA work out payment plans with affected landowners; 70% would like communication by letter; 65% agree with placing liens on properties. Two options - hiring a collection attorney and foreclosing on properties - each garnered 38% of the vote. Asked if they would like to see assessments lowered even if it means a reduction in services, 86% responded no and 14% yes.

Considering all of these issues, participants were asked about the size of the organization. Most thought it is just about right (62%) while 21% found it too big, 1% considered it to be too small and 15% weren't sure.

Last but not least, regarding the idea of splitting North and South Glastonbury into separate associations, 47% voted no, 26% yes, 21% need more info and 6% were undecided.

The Board wishes to thank everyone who participated. Your responses will help us plan how to move forward.