

## **Glastonbury Landowners For Positive Change**

***The mission of the GLFPC is to foster a landowner's association, of the people, by the people, and for the people of Glastonbury, create a harmonious and inclusive community, and enhance property values.***

This Summary/Interpretation of the GLA July 25, 2016 Project Review Meeting is offered as a volunteer service by the GLFPC.

Your suggestions are welcome, should there be oversights or errors.

### **Summary and Interpretation**

The GLA's Project Review Committee meeting held on Monday, July 25, 2016, at 7 pm, in the kitchen of Liberty Hall in North Glastonbury. The central purpose of this meeting was to refine the Instructions for Project Review Application, based on new GLA policies and procedures. This process has taken a number of months due to deliberations among board members regarding the wording, new additions and necessary omissions to the five-page draft.

Also on the docket were five applications that were in various stages of development. The committee members present were: Co-chairs Kevin Newby and Gerald Dubiel and committee members Ed Dobrowski, Paul Ranttalo and Leo Keeler. Board members Richard Johnson, Charlotte Mizzi and Charlene Murphy were in attendance, as were several landowners.

The meeting began with the review of the pending applications. As the discussion progressed, it was soon realized that only Ranttalo had seen the surveyor's papers for the first project. No one else on the committee, not even the Co-chairs, had laid eyes on these important papers. How could this committee approve this project without first studying the necessary information? Ranttalo grinned and claimed that he had given the final papers from this applicant to Karleen McSherry, GLA's former, and now temporary/interim administrative assistant. The other committee members assigned Ranttalo the action item to contact McSherry to scan and make copies, to assure that the all of the committee would receive them.

Moving on to the second project up for review, Ranttalo reported that he had verified the proper setbacks of an outbuilding for yet another applicant. For the second time, the majority of the Project Review committee had been excluded. The committee co-chairs repeated to Ranttalo that he needed to make sure that McSherry would give them copies for this project, as well.

The next two project review reports were presented by Dobrowski, who had determined that everything was in order for the third applicant's construction project. Dobrowski had backfilled this landowner's new septic system and thereafter had given McSherry the papers. The paperwork contained a refund request for the construction bond money. However, it was eventually realized that the refund could not be issued because the landowner had fallen behind on paying his dues. So, by consensus, the committee agreed. There was an obvious

conflict of interest involving Dobrowski, because he is being paid for this job. Thus, he cannot determine that the project is in compliance. Instead, Dubiel agreed to do the site inspection for final approval.

When an attendee questioned whether the committee should deal with a landowner who is in arrears, a lively discussion followed. While it is known that all applicants must be current in their assessments and in compliance with all terms of the covenants, the committee made an exception to the rule, citing health and safety concerns in this case. The standard requirement to reseed the disturbed land will likely be waived due to the proximity of this landowner's new greenhouse to his driveway and chicken yard.

The fourth applicant also requested final approval and a construction bond rebate, but was also behind on assessment payments by at least two quarters. It was mentioned that the GLA does not have internal accounts to credit this landowner's construction bond to his delinquent assessment account. Until this landowner is totally paid up, final approval of his was denied.

The committee updated one long-standing review. A subdivision driveway having drainage and easement issues continues to develop, so matters are inconclusive.

The next phase of the meeting was concentrated on what was to be the final polishing of the Instructions for Project Review Applications. All present were given draft copies with the proposed changes to the policies and procedures. The document had a good deal of original content, some strikethroughs and multiple sections in various colors to denote potential edits. This was how input from Mizzi, Murphy and Dan Kehoe (not present), could be differentiated from that of Keeler, who has extensive legal and real estate experience.

The main goal of Co-Chairs, Newby and Dubiel, along with Keeler, has been to reduce board liability by creating foolproof instructions. Line by line, sentence by sentence, the debate over wording became more time-consuming and contentious. Invaluable landowner input was consistently rebutted, most notably by Mizzi. Throughout the dialog, Keeler's unwavering position was best stated in his own words: "We acknowledge concerns so that they are not overlooked."

**GLFPC Note:** *Without uncompromising instructions, landowners could potentially end up in regrettable circumstances, as has happened in the past. A prime example is the landmark 3-story lavender tower in North Glastonbury, which many residents feel negatively impacts their community in many ways, including, but not limited to, viewsheds and property values.*

Dubiel's proposal that all project applications have lot lines and corners verified by a registered land surveyor was accepted and added to the document only as a recommendation, not a requirement. It was noted that in some cases, applicants do not know where their lot lines are because key markers can be difficult to find, missing or may have been moved.

Discussion followed on whether surrounding neighbors should be notified of project applications. Murphy said there was no way the administrative assistant had time to mail postcards to those who might be impacted by new building projects. Rather, the committee voted to post generic notices on the GLA website. For example: "A garage is planned on parcel X. Further information is available by contacting the GLA Board." This vote will be subject to full board approval at the August 8, 2016 GLA Board meeting.

The committee did not act on a suggestion that applicants themselves should be responsible to inform neighbors of their building projects. As a courtesy, Keeler offered to contact neighbors in proximity to future building projects, as long no conflict exists with the governing documents. "We are here to work for all landowners and represent their interests," he stated. The committee then gave him the go-ahead.

Next, the paragraph about the 18-month timeline for project completion, along with the option to apply for an extension, was debated. Mizzi and Murphy argued that the instructions for both needed be changed to say, "A recommendation," rather than, "A requirement." Co-Chair Newby reminded them that the 18-month timeline posted on the GLA website, was excerpted from the original Project Review Instructions. Mizzi added, "Such a policy must have been adopted before my time!" Keeler interceded, and pointed out that, "The board adopted this policy and they have been following it for many years. Any significant alteration to the wording or rescission of this policy would be a change to the covenants, which requires a full landowner review, followed by a community-wide vote."

Murphy was unable to find a copy of this policy in her reference materials. Until such time as Mizzi and Murphy research the specific terms of this policy, the completion of these instructions is further delayed.

The meeting had clearly reached its conclusion, as people walked out the door around 9:45 pm.

[Glastonbury Landowners For Positive Change](#)