

A Combined Public Meeting was held by the Homer Town Board and Planning Board on Wednesday, April 19, 2023, at the Town Hall basement regarding amending the town's comprehensive plan to allow billboards along Route 81 was called to order by Chairman of the Planning Board Michael McMahon at 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Frederick J. Forbes, Supervisor
Michael R. Park, Deputy Supervisor
Barry E. Warren, Councilman
Larry Jones, Councilman
Kevin M. Williams, Councilman
Michael McMahon, Planning Board Chairman
Jon Miller, Planning Board Member
Bruce Crandall, Planning Board Member
Erin Mahunik, Planning Board Member
Patrick M. Snyder, Attorney for the Town
Heather M. Hill, Town Clerk

ABSENT

Chad Butts, Planning Board Member
Michael May, Planning Board Member
Zach Young, Planning Board Member
Lindsay Andersen, Planning Board Secretary

SPEAKERS

Miles Dudgeon, Homer Resident
Karen Dudgeon, Homer Resident
Caoimhe Dudgeon, Homer Resident
Liz Arnold, Homer Resident
Gary Lawrence, Homer Resident
Jason Allen, Homer Resident
Tim Malchak, Homer Resident
Kelly Preston, Homer Resident
Amy Bertini, Homer Resident
Mary Dafoe, Homer Resident
Rae Cute, Homer Resident
Victor Siegle, Homer Resident
Richard J. "R.J." Calale, Homer Resident
Melissa Dugan, Homer Resident
Martin Sweeney, Town of Homer Historian
Michael Dillon, Village of Homer Resident
Ashley Neiderman-Bonanno, Village of Homer Resident
Brenda Contento, Preble Resident
Boyd Chapman, Homer Resident
Anita Jebbett, Homer Resident

OTHERS PRESENT

Debbie Chapman, Homer Resident
Amy Dahlman, Homer Resident
Kevin McMahon, Town of Homer Code Enforcement Officer
Cathy Lawrence, Homer Resident
Mike Eves, X101 Radio Station
Jack Eves, X101 Radio Station
Dwight Berlew, Homer Resident

Diane Gutchess, Homer Resident
Steven Major, Preble Resident
Jon Kozlowski, Cortlandville Resident
Ann Siegle, Homer Resident
Priscilla Berggren-Thomas, Homer Resident
Amy Rice, Homer Resident
Maria Arnold, Homer Resident
Jeff Morse, Homer Resident
Sabrina Clark, Homer Resident
Theresa Fendya, Village of Homer Resident
Tom Fendya, Village of Homer Resident
Kerin Richardson, Virgil Resident
Bob Haight, Homer Resident
Patrick Clune, Village of Homer Resident
Karen Dillon, Village of Homer Resident
Donald Ferris, Village of Homer Resident
Emmanuel Pothos, Cortlandville Resident
Betsy Phelps, Village of Homer Resident
Paul Morris, Little York Resident
Robert Bonanno, Village Resident
Pierre Beaudry, Village Resident
Kathleen Lee, Village Resident
David Lee, Village Resident
Mike Dexter, Cortland Resident

A request has been made that the comprehensive plan and zoning law be amended to allow billboards in areas which are zoned industrial and/ or business, north of the Village of Homer. At the present time the zoning law prohibits such off-premises signs. Planning Board Chairman, Michael McMahan opened the combined public meeting by reading off a short list of rules to keep the flow of the meeting smooth & professional. Michael McMahan explained that this is an information gathering session for the Town Board and Planning Board on the subject of billboards. Chairman McMahan read three letters submitted by Christine Pacheco, Little York Lake resident; James Bedrin, Little York Lake resident; and Thomas Taylor, & Elizabeth Wenz, Town for Homer Residents, who were unable to attend the meeting.

Sirs, I'm a lake resident and in strong opposition to the proposed changes to zoning laws that will allow off-premises advertising and the resulting onslaught of billboards peppering our lake's landscape. Please read my concerns at the meeting and enter some into the minutes.
Thank you.
Christine Pacheco

Dear Town of Homer Town Board,

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed billboard development in our community, particularly in light of the potential impact on Little York Lake and its wildlife. As a future homeowner on Little York Lake and future resident of the Town of Homer, I am deeply concerned about the negative impacts that billboards could have on our town's aesthetics, environment, economy, and wildlife. I understand that the Town of Homer Board is currently considering a proposal to allow billboards development in our community. While I appreciate the desire to promote economic growth and support local businesses, I believe that billboards are not the right way to achieve these goals. Think about it, when was the last time you drove by a billboard, and it influenced you to take any sort of action? We live in an increasingly digital world. Not only will billboard development create negative impacts, but they're an outdated source of development. According to recent research, billboards are becoming increasingly outdated and ineffective as an advertising medium. Articles such as "The Outdated Business of Billboard Advertising" (Inc., 2017) and "Billboards Are Outdated, Ineffective and Harmful to Communities" (AdWeek, 2019) highlights how advances in technology and changes in consumer behavior are making traditional billboards less effective in reaching modern audiences. Additionally, "Why Billboards are a Waste of Time and Money." (Entrepreneur, 2020) notes that businesses may be better served by investing in digital marketing strategies instead. Little York Lake is a treasured natural resource that provides important habitat for a variety of wildlife, including birds and turtles. However, the potential visibility of billboards from the lake could disrupt their natural behavior and negatively impact their populations. Furthermore, billboards can have negative impacts on the aesthetics of our community. Research has shown that people generally prefer natural landscapes and find billboards to be unattractive (see, for

example, this study: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0169204616305859>). Additionally, billboards can contribute to visual pollution and detract from the beauty of our town. Billboards also have negative environmental impacts, such as contributing to light pollution, which can disrupt wildlife and interfere with astronomical observations. They can also contribute to visual pollution, which can harm people's mental health and wellbeing (see, for example, this article: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/06/how-billboards-have-shaped-ourlandscapes-and-minds/>).

Finally, some research suggests that billboards can have negative impacts on nearby property values (see, for example, this study: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S009506960600045X>). This could harm our local economy and potentially impact property owners' ability to sell or rent their homes. This is alarming for someone who just purchased a property on the lake.

In light of these concerns, I urge you to reconsider the proposal to allow billboard development in our community. I believe that the negative impacts of billboards far outweigh any potential benefits, and that there are better ways to promote economic growth and support local businesses.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
James Bedrin

Hi everyone,

Thank you for the opportunity to have our email read at the Homer Town meeting on 4/19/23 and included in the meeting minutes.

We are Town of Homer residents, Thomas Taylor, and Elizabeth Wenz, residing on Elm Ave in Little York.

We very strongly oppose changing the zoning laws to allow for off-premises advertising in the town of Homer.

The lighted or LED billboards that would be erected along route 81 and elsewhere within the town would be an eyesore and would take away from the natural beauty of our rural area. The billboards would surely be visible to residences and public spaces adjacent to where they'd be erected. Little York Lake and the surrounding region is one of Cortland County's most beautiful areas. We feel angry and saddened at the thought of having our views ruined by the inclusion of lighted billboards. The light from them would add to the light already seen from headlights at night on route 81.

As tax paying town of Homer residents, we feel our right to enjoy the natural beauty of our home's surrounding area, as it currently is, would be infringed upon, should these zoning laws be changed. We strongly urge the town board to refrain from changing the laws that would allow billboards in the town of Homer.

Thank you,
Thomas Taylor & Elizabeth Wenz

Chairman McMahon then called forth resident that wished to speak.

Miles Dudgeon, Town of Homer resident, said he has a degree in lighting design, and he prefers that the Zoning Law is not changed to allow off site advertising billboard signage. If the Zoning Law was to be amended, he suggested that the board do more in-depth research and reach out to institutions for guidance.

Karen Dudgeon, Town of Homer resident, said that after reading the proposed draft for the I81 billboards, she does not see any value or upside to our town and for that reason alone she thinks the project should not move forward.

Caoimhe Dudgeon, Town of Homer resident, said by building these proposed billboards without consideration for the environment and light pollution effects it will ruin the dark skies. If these billboards are being built, she strongly encourages the Town Board to conduct an environmental impact report and follow the guidelines outlined by the International Dark Skies Association. She would like the board to seriously consider if this is what is best for the community.

Liz Arnold, Village of Homer resident, said the current draft of this digital billboard legislation is way too broad and will end up bringing more harm than good to our area. She encouraged the Town board not to proceed with this digital billboard legislation. If the town does need the revenue, she asks the law to be scripted too a very narrow scope and only allow one billboard that has strict guidelines.

Gary Lawrence, Town of Homer resident, was on the Zoning Board of Appeals for approximately twenty years and chairman for fifteen years. He strongly urges the Town Board not to update the zoning law. Billboards are banned in the current Town of Homer's comprehensive plan. Currently the Town of Homer permits 4X8 feet signs. He says that the Town has already made the right choice in banning billboards. He asked the

Board, please do not make the wrong decision that the Town will regret for the next hundred years.

Jason Allen, Landowner in the Town of Homer, said he is in favor of the billboards. As a landowner, he and his family have the right to make money off their property. Being that his property is zoned industrial he does not see the harm in it.

Tim Malchak, Town of Homer resident, said he would like to have a billboard placed on his property that is zoned industrial and stated that he should be able to do what he wants with his land. He asked the Board to please consider having the billboards because it would benefit all the businesses in this community.

Kelly Preston, Town of Homer resident, said she is speaking tonight against amending the Town's comprehensive plan to allow billboards along route 81. All she asks of the Board is to please listen to the public who elected you to act in their best interest.

Amy Bertini, Town of Homer resident, paraphrased the Town's current comprehensive plan. She is concerned about the effect billboards will have on all the time and money the county has put forth into Dwyer Park and on the surrounding hillsides.

Mary Dafoe, Town of Homer resident, stated the residents at a previous meeting demonstrated almost one hundred to one that the locals were anti billboards.

Rae Cute, Town of Homer resident, sees no need for billboards in Little York.

Victor Siegle, Village of Homer resident, said after seeing the speakers especially the Dudegon's, so eloquent he does not need to say a word. He is opposed to amending the Comprehensive Plan.

Richard J "R.J." Calale, Town of Homer resident, stated he is a real estate agent that is keen and aware of property values. He is looking for the Town Board to amend the comprehensive plan but only on a case-by-case basis. After he reviewed the documents, the only sign he felt was not going to be problematic was the sign pointing to the northbound, zoned in a commercial area.

Melissa Dugan, Homer resident, does not see any harm in the billboards.

Martin Sweeney, Town, and Village of Homer Historian, informed the Board that it is his job to educate, inform, celebrate, and promote our historic character and environment. He sees the pros and cons after doing his homework. His philosophy on this is, when in doubt please leave it out.

Michael Dillon, Village of Homer resident, said he is against the billboard's proposal.

Ashley Neiderman-Bonanno, Village of Homer resident and local business owner on Main Street, stated she is opposed to the signs and feels there are other ways to advertise local business without billboards.

Brenda Contento, a small business owner in Homer, said she is totally opposed. She can see the cell tower on one of the four properties from her residence and there is not enough tree cover to block the lighting of the billboard.

Boyd Chapman, Town of Homer resident, said he is against it.

Anita Jebbett, Town of Homer resident, stated she was against the billboard proposal. She believes billboards are an item of the past and completely unnecessary. People utilize their smart phones and there are other ways to advertise.

After hearing all the comments from the public, the opinion was 87% against and 13% in favor of the allotment of billboards.

Once the last speaker was finished Chairman McMahon addressed the room that there will be no deliberation between the boards. He welcomes anyone that would like to submit further comments in writing to the Town clerk's office to please feel free to do so. As there was no one else from the public that wanted to speak and there were no further questions, the public meeting was declared closed at 6:43 p.m.

Heather M. Hill
Town Clerk