

May 2, 2025

The Honorable Mayor Tom Graham

City Councilperson Jaime Melke
City Councilperson Kathy Motschall
City Councilperson Wendy Reeve
City Councilperson Micheal Behrmann
160 Zoll Street
Harbor Springs, MI 49740

Dear Mr. Mayor, and City Council Members,

First, thank you each for your dedication to your job as a Council members. Your thoughtful questions and attention to details make it clear you have the town's best interests at heart. With just five members on the City Council, each vote carries significant weight, and your roles have been invaluable.

Regarding the Flagpole:

While the Club's wish to commemorate its 50th anniversary is understandable this flagpole project is not ready to be approved by City Council. The location is a step too far—and one we believe the Council must firmly reject.

It reflects a broader push to 'enhance or beautify,' modernize, and alter Harbor Springs in ways many residents do not prefer—and have not approved.

There are far more suitable locations within the city—and even within Zorn Park—such as near the Zorn Beach sign, the WWI Memorial, the parking lot/bathrooms, or the alley near the yellow house. Any of these would allow the Garden Club to achieve its goals without breaking up the park's most valuable open space. That open lawn is essential for sunbathing, picnicking, playing catch or Frisbee, and enjoying the beach, without worrying about trampling a flower bed or navigating around new sidewalks and paved areas.

The proposal also reflects an inconsistent and, seemingly at times arbitrary application of ADA standards: strict where unnecessary and overlooked where genuinely needed. There is no justification for adding an extensive ornamental garden and concrete structure in the middle of limited parkland, which would trigger mandated ADA buildouts, such as concrete paths to the flagpole, that are unnecessary and have not been sought by residents. The current setup has served the community well for decades. Notably, the marble monument at the base of the flagpole, intended long ago for further commemoration, sits blank to this day.

Additionally, while the Garden Club's offer is presented as a donation, no specific dollar amount or terms have been disclosed. If this is to be treated as a true donation, the Council should require a formal agreement detailing full responsibilities—including funding, maintenance, irrigation, edging, long-term bed upkeep, and scope—before any further consideration.

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Contact Us at WeLoveHarborSprings@gmail.com

This well-intentioned proposal is neither well-conceived nor aligned with real needs of our waterfront. More pressing priorities—such as upgrading the restroom facilities—will deliver far greater benefits to residents and visitors alike.

The most recent sizable donation to Zorn Park was made with the explicit intention of preserving open space by relocating the playground to its original beach location. What message does the City send to current and future donors if it fails to honor the clearly stated intentions behind such gifts?

Perhaps most important is honoring the intent of Emily Meier, who, along with her husband Henry, gifted the land for the park to the city in 1933. After the drowning of a local boy, Mrs. Meier was determined to provide a safe public beach for children and families. She rejected offers to sell the property to private buyers in favor of gifting it to the city. Her vision was clear: maintaining open, public bathing and recreation space.

As reported in the *Emmet County Graphic* on August 31, 1933: “Council Purchases 173 Feet of Property on West Side of Harbor from Allen Brothers at a cost of \$3500. The city this week acquired 233 feet of water frontage on the west side of the harbor to be used as a public bathing beach. Mrs. Henry M. Meier made an outright gift to the city of 60 feet of this frontage expressly “to be used always as a public bathing beach, particularly for children.” Mrs. Meier’s gift was made on the provision that the city would buy the former Allen property and that the entire site would be converted into a public bathing beach. When the council closed the contract Tuesday morning at a special meeting with the Allen brothers, Mrs. Meier immediately deeded her property”.

Encroaching on the park with a paved, purely ornamental garden—further shrinking the precious beach and recreation area—directly contradicts the spirit and specific goals of Emily Meier’s gift.

We respectfully urge you to vote to preserve Harbor Springs’ precious green space, reject this proposal, and return it to the Garden Club with instructions to identify a more appropriate and welcomed location. This is an opportunity to reaffirm the city’s century-long tradition of preservation, protection, and responsible stewardship.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and leadership.

Sincerely,

Janie Jenkins, on behalf of We Love Harbor Springs.org
441 2nd Street, Harbor Springs, MI. 49740

CC: Jim Ramer



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