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Date: Wed, Feb 20, 2019 at 3:43 PM

Subject: GLWA Third Party Facilitation - Board Presentation

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*“Working together for a clean and safe environment”*

To Chairman Baker, Vice-Chairman Munfakh and the GLWA Board of Directors:

I had prepared this statement for the Board meeting of February 14<sup>th</sup> but was unable to arrive in time for the portion of the meeting that provided an opportunity for comments to be received by the audience. I thought it important as a former member of the Selection Committee that recommended Bridgeport to the Board of Directors, and former Co-Chair who had the opportunity of working closely in their first year, to speak from my perspective of their first year performance. Thus, I am submitting the following comments to be received by the board regarding the presentation on the progress made by our third-party facilitators, Bridgeport Consulting.

*“Bridgeport helps people have the conversations they need to have...Surfacing sensitive issues and talking about them in a respectful and productive way is foundational for any high-performing group; the role of a neutral, third-party facilitator can be essential in establishing and maintaining this norm.”*

– Kerry Sheldon, (explaining the discipline and importance of third-party facilitation to the Selection Committee).

As a former Co-Chair and member of the Third-Party Facilitation Selection Committee who selected Bridgeport Consulting as the replacement for Project Innovations, I believe that Ms. Sheldon, in her comment to the Selection Committee, correctly pointed out the primary value of third-party facilitation; that there are conversations that we, as customer representatives and GLWA administration and staff need to have to continue to grow into a high performing partnership. This effort began in the late 1990’s as a means to address the distrust and animosity that existed between DWSD and its customer

communities. It was a rocky beginning, and no-one was sure this would work. Charlie Fleetham and Project Innovations worked extremely hard to bring these two groups of “playground adversaries” together and eventually created an atmosphere where productive discussions could take place. From that, came real collaborative solutions to serious concerns and problems to where we are today, taking on the challenge of working through contentious issues towards viable and long-lasting solutions. As we move forward, collaboration is more and more becoming the norm and not a distant goal. Third-party facilitation is the key factor. It is the factor that allows for all parties to be heard, fairly and respectfully. It is important because the facilitators are not advocating, but maintaining an impartial position of facilitating conversations, not allowing one party to get up from the table and take their ball and go home, or allow problems begin to backlog, creating dissensions and breakdowns in communication, all counterproductive and potentially costly. As we know, those are the things that lead to unnecessary litigation. It is my hope that the GLWA will continue its commitment to third-party facilitation as a practice, and to recognize the value that this practice has for the GLWA now and in the future. As for Bridgeport Consulting, I believe the selection committee’s choice as the third-party facilitator for the Customer Outreach program has been validated by the outstanding performance of Bridgeport’s staff. They had big shoes to fill in their predecessor, and large challenges to work through with us, but have met those challenges admirably with a high level of professionalism and success.

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*“The Van Buren Public Services Department is committed to a clean and safe environment, enhanced service delivery to its customers and protection of the significant public investment in the township’s buildings and grounds, and water distribution and sanitary collection systems.”*