

LAKE TOWNSHIP, ROSCOMMON COUNTY, MICHIGAN
OFFICIAL PUBLIC EXPLANATION – REFERENDUM ON ORDINANCE NO. 55D

(PRIVACY FENCES)

At its October 22, 2025 meeting, the Lake Township Board adopted Ordinance No. 55D, which amended Section 802C of the Lake Township Zoning Ordinance to allow, in the R-1 Waterfront Residential District, the construction of privacy fences not to exceed six (6) feet in height from the front corner of a dwelling (the lakeside of the home) to the corner of a detached garage closest to the road right-of-way, provided that the fence does not encroach upon the required setbacks.

Previously, six-foot privacy fences were not permitted in this location. This amendment would allow a solid or opaque fence to be placed along the side of a waterfront property between the dwelling and garage area.

Background

In the R-1 Waterfront Residential District, homes are typically built close together with the front of the home facing the lake. Under this new provision, a property owner could construct a six-foot-high privacy fence extending from the lakeside front corner of the dwelling to either an attached or detached garage—whichever is closer to the road right-of-way. If a home has only an attached garage, the fence could extend from the lakeside corner of the home to that garage corner. If a detached garage is set farther back, the fence could continue to that point.

Arguments Against Ordinance 55D

Opponents believe that allowing six-foot privacy fences in these areas will:

- Disrupt the open and scenic lakefront character that defines waterfront neighborhoods.
- Create safety and visibility hazards, limiting sight lines for motorists, bicyclists, joggers, and pedestrians—especially on narrow roads with no sidewalks.
- Visually isolate properties and block natural views between neighboring homes, reducing the sense of community typical of “lake life.”
- Conflict with the traditional aesthetics of Houghton Lake’s shoreline areas, where openness and shared visibility have long been valued features.

Arguments in Favor of Ordinance 55D

Supporters of the ordinance argue that:

- The change provides privacy for homeowners in close-set lakefront neighborhoods.