

There's still room on the Depot Street bandwagon

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1. Swine flu immunizations this fall for students, to prevent death and viral paralysis;

2. The billion-dollar economic recovery plan by the federal government, and whether it can be successfully undertaken at a time when we are still funding and fighting wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; and

3. Should there be a traffic light on the main drag, and, if there is to be one, how to make sure people from throughout the state do not find out and thus decide Cape is no longer A Tranquil Life and Blissful Existence the Way Image-Conscious Maine Should Be.

In Scarborough, people want to know more about the Pine Point controversy in which, to the chagrin of many residents, the Town Council swapped adjacent strips of land with the Lighthouse Motel owners.

As a public service, here are the questions, and some answers proffered by me:

Q: Is there some way I can get involved in the Pine Point public controversy, or is it too late since the council's latest "yes" vote?

A: Yes! You can still get involved, in many ways. You can write a nasty letter to the editor. You can discourage people from attending, or speaking at, any public hearings that might be held in the future. You can send mass e-mails to people who disagree with you in a way that will clog their in-box, and possibly freeze up their computer. Don't give up yet!

Q: What is the first step?

A: Demonize the opposition. Come to the conclusion that all persons in the opposing camp are evil, and do not have the interests of the Town of Scarborough at heart.

Q: But what if I think this is an issue on which reasonable people can disagree honestly?

A: Huh?! How 1950s of you! Get rid of that idealistic mindset. If you want to fight in public, the gloves come up. Roll around in the gutter.

Spurwink River Packet



By Dan Warren

Q: How exactly will that approach play out in this land-swap issue?

A: If you are against the vote to grant the Lighthouse Motel the strip of land nearest their motel so they can have guests park in front of their rooms, like in the Bates Motel in "Psycho" or any other common commercial setting, reach down and grab some mud.

They are greedy pigs. They just want the land to make more money. Plus, they might just end up making condos! Ye gads!!!

Q: What if I am for the Truman family, and against the efforts of some neighbors and others who want to stop the land-swap deal?

A: Tell people the Town Council and town manager are bozos and idiots. Say they have not done their homework. That they have agreed to the Trumans' wish to get a swath of land from the town about 30 feet wider than the swath of land they are giving up to the town (town is getting 13,000 square feet; Lighthouse Motel folks are getting 20,000 square feet). Say they are agreeing to the Trumans' request for the same reasons that some parents eventually give in to a persistent child who wants ice cream alone for supper: "OK, yes, you can have it - now shut up!"

Q: Isn't it true that this is a one-sided deal for the Trumans?

A: Yes. They get more land. Worth more money. Who knows what they will do with it! They might use it to "crowd" townspeople away from the "new" pathway to the beach supposedly planned under the Town Council vote.

Q: Any other bad things for the town in this vote?

A: Yes. There has always been an interesting game of Pedestrian Dodge Ball, some call it, on the strip of pavement that the motel wants to use for parking.

See, currently, the motel guests park in one "strip" of parking

spaces maybe 70 or 80 feet from the motel. They walk across a town-owned strip to get to the motel.

People like to drive in the town-owned strip, peek at the ocean, turn around and drive back out.

Q: Why is that bad for the town?

A: Sometimes they are doing this driving while people are walking back and forth to the motel and their parking spaces. Some of the drivers are drunk!

And some of the motel guests are in their dark bathrobes ready for bed!

It's fun to try to hit them! Make them into hood ornaments!

Or you can play a game with a friend (especially good if you are a teenager and fairly new cruising driver): 10 points for a native, 20 for someone from New Hampshire, 21 for a Vermonter (they have a Socialist in Congress! Quick, Martha, get my gun!), 30 points for a Canadian guest, 100 for a Mass-person from Massachusetts.

Q: OK, so the town "loses" some money if we give up a strip to the motel bigger than the one we are getting. Anything else bad about the deal?

A: God, yes! We would be changing Depot Road!

Q: What is Depot Street?

A: That is the name of the road that runs alongside the motel.

Q: What's the big deal about changing Depot Street?

A: British sailors used Depot Street hundreds of years ago to haul trees and masts from our forests to their ships! Some of the stones on the road were the same ones that the Queen's men stepped on in colonial times! Some of the dried seagull droppings that would be cleaned up, or paved over, as part of this land swap were probably original bird waste from the 1700s!!

Q: Is this love for Depot Street new?

A: Oh, no, no, no. Historians will tell you about the bicentennial we had for Depot Street back many years ago to celebrate its significance to the town. People in period costumes. Bumper stickers. Pins. T-shirts and fried dough, too.

And the tricentennial we held recently in town was an even greater celebration. A parade

down Route 1. Another concert in the town's new Memorial Park. People dressed up in period costumes. A slick glossy booklet, and more fried dough and T-shirt stands.

Q: What have people affiliated with this Citizens to Save Depot Street done to pursue their goal?

A: They have circulated two petitions. One is to overturn the council vote on the land swap. The other is to try to get Depot Street on the National Register of Historic Landmarks.

The second effort looks good, supporters say. This country has an alarming dearth of sites where British ships in the 1700s dropped anchor and hauled trees across sand dunes to bring them home and use them, probably, to build condos.

Add the "original seagull poop" issue, and the arguments are strong about the street's historical importance.

Q: But now that the council has voted twice, isn't the issue over?

A: Oh, ye of little faith! No! There are always lawyers! And lawsuits! And litigation!

Q: But won't it stop there?

A: Be strong - it doesn't have to! There are always appeals to the Maine Supreme Court, and to the U.S. Supreme Court. Innocent until proven broke!

Some people, when they have a midlife crisis, get a sports car; others get a lawyer. This might become a big private sandbox with pails, shovels with sharp edges, and rough play.

Q: Anything else I should know?

A: Yes. This will be an educational seminar in How Things Are Done in the New Scarborough:

Slash and burn.

Take no prisoners.

Money for the local soup kitchen? No.

Money for legal fees to remind people who's in charge here?

Plenty!

Q: What is ultimately at stake?

A: For the winners, the right to utter the line of the greenskeeper played by Bill Murray in "Caddyshack": "I'll show them the meaning of the word respect!"

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Dan Warren is a lawyer who lives in Scarborough

Opinion

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