



Pine Point residents propose alternate plan for Scarborough land swap **Published: Jul 02, 2009 8:50 am - By Peggy Roberts**

SCARBOROUGH — A Pine Point residents group has presented an alternative design for a land swap that the town has proposed forging with the owners of the Lighthouse Inn on Depot Street.

In addition, the Pine Point Residents Association has started circulating a petition presenting its position on Scarborough's management of the Depot Street area in the form of eight requests to the Town Council.

From the association's e-mails to its members and posts on its Web site, it appears the group that has been calling for better public access to Pine Point Beach for years will continue to fight any changes that the town attempts to make to improve that access if the deal cannot be made without giving up more land to the Trumans than the town gets in return.

In a hand-out headed "Urgent," the group said that under the town's current proposal, "the motel would get an almost two-for-one deal – they would get 50 feet, the town would get 22, but would have no room for vehicles to travel and turn around."

But the town's proposal shows the motel would relinquish a 13,044-square-foot parking strip and ocean access in exchange for an 18,329-square-foot parcel that includes Depot Street and an access path to the water. Though the motel would acquire a third more land than the town in the deal, it would lose five of its 28 parking spaces; remaining spaces would also be reduced in size from 9.5 to 9 feet.

The exchange is intended to accomplish two things. First, it would combine the town's apportionment from the swap with a small parcel of town-owned land next to the Beach Walk subdivision, which would provide enough room to create a turn-around and drop-off point for visitors to the beach. And it would move the motel's parking to a strip adjacent to the building, reducing the danger to guests who now park on the other side of Depot Street.

Town Manager Tom Hall has said that his obligation is to negotiate the best possible option for the people of Scarborough. But to make it happen, he said, there must be some benefit for the Trumans for them to agree to the deal.

"This land swap gives us options; today we don't have any," Hall said. "There is agreement that the current state of affairs is not acceptable. If we can agree on that, it is 75 percent of the problem."

Members of the residents group have served on several committees during the past few years in order to have a voice in town planning and decisions that involve the Pine Point area, and they object to the term "feud" being used to describe their repeated conflicts with the Trumans. But at the last Town Council meeting, several councilors used that word when explaining why it is time to act on the land swap and resolve the ongoing issues.

The chicane that blocks a portion of Depot Street, installed by the town to slow traffic that travels between the motel and its parking strip, has long been a source of contention for the group, which claims the barricade privatizes the

road. Several years ago, members were upset when the Trumans withdrew plans for a five-townhouse rework of the motel property that included a one-for-one land swap with the town. And more recently, they fought the Trumans' plan to convert the 22-unit motel into 22 seasonal condos.

The public hearing on the current swap proposal will be held at the next council meeting at 7 p.m., Wednesday, July 15. According to correspondence with its members, the group is calling for at least 40 people to speak against the town's proposal.

But Hall said Tuesday that councilors must make a decision to support or reject the plan that has already been proposed before they consider an alternative.

"The council passed the first reading and that's what will be coming back to them," he said. "Many will present their plans, I suspect, to the council; I don't intend to prepare a written commentary of their plan."

Hall said he planned to offer the council a list of public benefits that any proposal must be measured against, "because if it doesn't benefit the public, we shouldn't be talking about it."

As for the group's petition, Hall said it has no legal power before the council's decision.

"After the council takes action," he said, "there is a citizens' initiative process to overturn it."

If the group does not agree with the council's decision, it could attempt to collect the requisite number of signatures, which would place the initiative on the ballot for all town residents, Hall said.

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