Scarborough Leader July 24, 2009

Editors note:
The Leader received more than a dozen letters to the editor criticizing the exchange of land in Pine Point. Some of those letters could not be printed due to space reasons, but will be posted online at blog.scarboroughleader.com.

Clarification: Several letter writers reference a petition regarding land exchange. According to Town Clerk Tody Justice, the petition did hold up as valid.

Letters to the Editor

Add issue to agenda

Editor:

The vote to give away 100 year-old Depot Street at Pine Point Beach to motel owners was an awful mistake. Scarborough residents should be outraged. You all have to watch the tape. It's long but will teach you about how our government failed us.

The good news is the mistake can be fixed. We have one shot at it. So to voters, especially the ones who signed the petition discredited by the council chairman, step up and let the council know you want this mistake corrected.

Here's how. Councilors Sullivan and Roy can ask for an agenda item before Aug. 11 for a reconsideration vote at the council's Aug. 19 meeting. Please, councilors, call the clerk today and do what the council rules allow you to do: add this back to the agenda. We are confident you will do the right thing and vote to reverse the decision and delay it, which would be consistent with your views that night. To restate some of those words: Councilor Roy said, "This is a tough one... my biggest problem tonight is we that we don't really have a more definitive plan for the drop off access" and "I can see that there might be some designs that I could better live with... there's all kinds of things we might be able to do if we find the funding... I am having a tough time with this decision" and "I'm leaning toward voting no." Councilor Sullivan said, "Coming in before the meeting tonight... I was prepared to vote yes on this, however, listening to some common sense things... I also think we've got to get plans together a little better... what is fair is the question in my mind... I think we need more details on it... I thought I was clear on the details and after tonight I'm not sure that I am."

Here's your chance to join Councilors Rancourt and D'Andrea who were voices of reason and respectful of public input received. Reverse this decision.

Don Cote
Scarborough

continued

Reverse decision

Editor:

On July 15 at the town council meeting there was an outpouring of Scarborough residents, taxpayers, and interested parties concerning the proposed town "land swap" of Depot Street with the owners of the Lighthouse Motel. When almost 30 people spoke against the "land swap," 377 signatures are presented and the council chambers were filled with residents opposing this "land swap," and the council votes in favor of the swap, what is the point of a public hearing?

Town Council Chairman Mike Wood's display of disrespect and arrogance to residents in attendance and the issue was deplorable. I have never witnessed such behavior by an elected town official. He tossed the petition aside and said it was not valid, that only 166 of the signatures were residents. Regardless, that is still 166

See MCGURN page 6

McGurn

Continued from page 3

more people that are opposed to the town giving a public street to a private party.

To say that Depot Street is an accident waiting to happen is false. I have spent summers in Pine Point for more than 50 years and there has never been a major mishap there. Not only is it a public way to the beach but it is also an access for emergency vehicles to get on to the beach.

This is not an "equitable" deal for Scarborough taxpayers and it is a travesty of injustice to those who love Pine Point and want to maintain its welcoming atmosphere.

Jeanne McGurn
Scarborough

Letters to the Editor

Vote again in August on swap

Editor:

[Addressed to Scarborough Town Councilors Richard Sullivan and Judy Roy]

I want to thank you for the interest, concerns and reservations you expressed at the council meeting this July 15. The concerns and reservations you stated, that are now part of public record, are inconsistent with the way you eventually chose to vote. I was quite surprised by your vote, and was left confused by your inconsistent stance. With no plan to go by, with no money appropriated, with no budget presented or committed, without the planning board having approved a specific plan, it seems implausible to me that anyone could have passed any of the issues pertaining to this land swap.

The most prudent approach would have been to table these issues, awaiting a more thoughtful approach that would include the consideration of all substantive alternatives and possibilities. By voting to approve these issues on July 15, you chose to validate the needs of a few who stood to gain financially, and forsake the wishes of the many who stood to gain nothing financially, but only have what is best for the community as their concern.

With this in mind, I respectfully request you both make a motion to reconsider these items, and then cast your votes in opposition to these proposals. This action would be much more consistent with your public statements.

Robert and Pammela Rovner
Scarborough

Continued

Land exchange not thought out

Editor:

A tired chairman of Scarborough Town Council and an eager new town manager campaigned successfully to shut down a historic roadway to our ocean beach here in Pine Point forever – gifting it to an abutting ocean business – under the guise of a fair exchange for a narrow parking strip of land less than half the width of the road.

After having viewed a new graphic of a more equitable plan, after hearing 29 presenters requesting careful analysis and review, after receiving a petition signed by various people of interest including a predominant number of Scarborough taxpayers favoring further study and review, a narrow vote closed the doors on Depot Street at the sea.

Councilors D'Andrea and Rancourt were not to be dissuaded from a strong belief that further consideration might yield a better solution for Scarborough. Councilors Roy and Sullivan seemed troubled by a hasty decision and expressed their reservations and the need for more information. Other councilors: Wood, Babine and Ahlquist seem bent on just getting the issue behind them even though it may not be the best plan for Scarborough.

Councilors Roy and Sullivan can right this wrong by; 1) Making this issue an agenda item at the next town council meeting in August. 2) Request reconsideration, 3) Vote against the proposal.

Ken Lane
Scarborough

Exchange not fair for residents

Editor:

On July 15, the Scarborough Town Council voted for the free exchange of Depot Street, with access for the public to the beautiful beach in Pine Point to a private business, the Lighthouse Motel for a parking strip owned by the Inn.

I was present at the public hearing and the hall was filled. Twenty-nine of the 30 speakers at the hearing were against the land swap. I felt the same sentiment with those who opposed the vote. Public land belongs to the people and the town works for the people. Serious consideration and study should be conducted since the situation cannot be reversed once executed. I was really amazed at Chairman Wood's attitude during the deliberation. He rebutted the rational comments made by the speakers and discredited many of the 350 people who signed the petition to save the public road and beautiful vista of the ocean. The councilors who voted for the swap failed to consider the value of the land and why people opposed the land swap plan. It will defeat the purpose of holding public hearings if the public voice is not being heard. Councilor Roy and Councilor Sullivan indicated that they needed more information and study of the plan. It is the right thing to do for them to initiate a reconsideration at the next council meeting.

Gaston Lee
Scarborough

Continued

Councilors didn't listen to public

Editor:

I was in attendance at the Scarborough Town Council meeting last week when some councilors voted to give away a public road to the beach to a private business.

There were several speakers urging the plan be defeated. There was one speaker in favor of passing the proposal. Some councilors expressed strong reservations about the plan and its lack of details and questioned if funds were available to get it done.

I thank Councilor Sullivan, who spoke about the need for more information and study. Thanks also to councilors Roy, D'Andrea and Rancourt who tried multiple times to get the item tabled. For a moment it seemed like the proposal would be defeated and that there would be time to develop a plan that would be more agreeable to the citizens and not just the business owners.

However, during the council's deliberation, Chairman Wood tried to rebut the excellent points made by citizens that spoke, and disparaged those who collected the signatures on the petition as well as those signing it and suggested that some people will sign anything. It was a disservice to those many of you who thoughtfully signed the petition supporting the effort to save that wonderful public road and view of the ocean.

I hope the two councilors who went on record as concerned about this but voted in the affirmative, Councillors Sullivan and Roy, will put this issue on the agenda for reconsideration. Please acknowledge this was not the right decision for Scarborough. Please ask for a "reconsideration" agenda item for your August meeting to save this road for public use and seek an alternative plan.

Joan Lourie
Scarborough

Resident not heard

Editor:

I am writing concerning the closing of the end of the Pine Point Road, right at the beach, also known as Depot Street, in front of the Lighthouse Motel. I spoke at the town council's July 15 public hearing but certainly did not feel I was "heard" by some members of the council. If citizens watch this meeting online on the town's Web site or on TV they may be as shocked as we were by the comments made by the chairman and two other councilors who rejected and even discredited public comments. Those comments made me feel there really is no purpose in having public hearings. When 30 people gather the courage to speak against a proposal, those citizens' words ought to mean something. For councilors to suggest people only go to hearings because they represent one side of the issue is simply wrong.

My view is there would be an equal number of people speaking in favor of a plan if that was the sentiment of the community. Where were all the people Ahlquist claimed supported this plan? It's easy to say people won't "come out... because they will be criticized," Mr. Ahlquist. But doesn't your common sense lead you to the same conclusion about those who came and spoke against it? Aren't they subject to criticism? Guess what; they were, and it was you and Mr. Babine and Mr. Wood who did the criticism. You made up your minds in June and stated so and it's on tape. That was before the public had a chance to speak about the plan. But at least councilors Roy and Sullivan expressed honest reservations about it and have a chance to be fix this. Hopefully the four who had reservations will vote to overturn the last vote.

Dianne McLellan
Scarborough

Let us be heard

Editor:

May the people of Scarborough speak out.

It is my hope the people of Scarborough will express their outrage at the action of the town council last Wednesday night. A good portion of Depot Road, now known as Pine Point Road, will be given to a private organization free of charge in what is characterized as a "land swap."

A public hearing on the matter was held prior to the vote of the council. A number of people spoke against the land swap and a petition also was submitted, all of which fell on deaf ears with the majority of the councilors.

However, several councilors expressed reservations, and asked for the matter to be tabled. They were ignored. It is possible for councilors voting against the land swap to ask that this vote be reconsidered.I certainly hope Councilors Roy and Sullivan will do the right thing and request a reconsideration vote on this land "give-away."

Graham T. Pierce
Scarborough