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## **PINE POINT** **Residents Association**

TO: Editor

FROM: Pine Point Residents Association

DATE: August 31, 2008

The article written by reporter Meggan Clark of the Scarborough Current dated August 28, 2008 (“Pine Point Group Wearing out Welcome”) addresses only one of a number of issues identified by the Pine Point Residents Association, (formerly called the Pine Point Residents Group).

The Pine Point Residents Association exists as a “watchdog” group advocating on local area issues such as infrastructure and zoning impacting the Pine Point neighborhood and the greater Scarborough community.

Pine Point has no representation on the Town Council. Quietly-approved concessions and decisions in recent years by the Town administration have often affected this unique neighborhood in ways some citizens object to. The Pine Point Residents Association works with our elected officials to inform and persuade them and to keep neighbors informed.

The road repair referenced in the article was proposed to be done after Memorial Day. The neighborhood was informed two weeks before work was to begin. It is the very same small portion of road the contractor of the new subdivision damaged last year when a crew broke the water main one Saturday in July. The Planning Board prohibited summer construction on this project, but it was allowed by the town administration.

The town engineer’s plan last spring called for re-installing the controversial barricade on Depot St. which the Town Council ordered considerably reduced less than two years ago – after the town manager expanded it and made it permanent. The road elevation was also changed, affecting abutting properties, and the road was to be considerably narrowed. Given the history of this area, there should have been better planning and communication.

Representatives of the Pine Point Residents Association met May 21<sup>st</sup> with town officials to ask questions in order to inform its members. No position was taken on the plan at that time since we had just learned the details. It was the Town Manager who cancelled the project at the Town Council meeting later that night, stating, “As you might expect we’ve not been able to reach any kind of

consensus or buy in on any of the improvements...” To our great surprise, he then told the Council they would not be doing the work. These are the facts.

The Scarborough Town Council recently authorized a study committee which includes municipal employees, abutters and other parties to begin its mission in early September of 2008 to review and find resolution to potentially conflicting issues. Hopefully the committee will be an initial step toward establishing greater and more effective involvement by all parties.

Unfortunately, negative articles such as the one written by Ms. Clark do nothing toward generating a positive atmosphere and improved communications.

For the Pine Point Residents Association,

Harold Hutchinson, Judy Shirk, Elaine Richer, Jack Callahan, John Thurlow, Sue Perrino, Judy Mushial

(Note: the Pine Point Residents Group voted to change the word “Group” to “Association” in its name)

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*(The following letter from members of the Association was provided for the website. It is not an official statement from the 7 Representatives, only their personal response to the article mentioned. We post it for members to read. The press is asked to attribute it properly).*

## **Editors**

Ms. Clark of the Scarborough Current led her article entitled “Pine Point Group Wearing Out Welcome” (August 28, 2008) with these words:

...town councilors say they’re fed up with the beachfront neighbors group that has challenged nearly every proposed change in Pine Point over the past few years.

The reporter’s words suggest all Town Councilors agree with that statement. That is unlikely. Council Chair, Jeff Messer and other elected officials, including Council Member Michael Wood, have publicly praised the Pine Point Residents Association for its “professional and well-prepared” advocacy of area issues. Mr. Wood was among several Councilors who paid tribute to the group when the Council supported the recent proposal for reinitiating a study of the controversial area of Pine Point referenced in the article. It is unfortunate his statements were misrepresented.

Ms. Clark’s article is factually inaccurate. The neighborhood is very aware the Association’s support for a five condominium conversion of the Lighthouse Motel three years ago, a plan the owners presented in public forums held after the Zoning Board directed them to “work with the neighbors.”

Our group lobbied strongly for the original developer of the 9-lot subdivision called “Beachwalk” across the street from the motel to donate a portion of that parcel (the land deeded to the low tide mark) to the Town so beach access and public use of the shore would never be challenged there in the future as has been the case in other coastal communities.

The Pine Point Residents Association lobbied as well for an additional 3,200 square foot parcel of land bordering the subdivision perimeter - eliminating a house lot substantially impacting public views of the ocean while providing citizens a small patch of public property at the shore.

The Pine Point Residents Association was also successful convincing the Town Council to order removal of a permanent barricade installed across Depot St. running in front of the motel. The public road parallel to the motel has been essentially privatized over the past 18 years because of the barricade

authorized by the town administration and installed there every summer. It was made permanent by the Town Manager two years ago until our group worked with the Town Council to have it substantially reduced.

The group has lobbied for sidewalks, enforcement of speed limits, restrictions to preserve public views and for policies opening public rights-of-way to the beach the Town had essentially closed. We are currently preparing to undertake a study of the tax assessment criteria used when the Town assesses the great diversity of property in Pine Point with the goal of revealing what many believe are dramatic inconsistencies.

When the Town decided to do what was reported in the Current's article as "routine" road improvements along the end of the Pine Point Rd., we repeated our position that construction should not be done during the summer, and we asked many of questions. The plan to essentially reconstruct that section of road, which is arguably the busiest and most dangerous in Pine Point, was crafted by the Town engineer with no input whatsoever from neighbors, abutters or citizens. The public was not informed of the late-June construction project until two weeks before it was to begin. Furthermore, the engineer's plan included expanding the controversial barricade once again even though the Town Council had ordered it removed and a much smaller curb put in its place only 16 months before. Citizens recall summer 2007 when the developer of Beachwalk was allowed by the Town Manager to tear-up this same patch of road resulting in a water main break on a beautiful Saturday in July (Planning Board approval of that project specifically prohibited summer construction in the road and on the property. It has never been fully reported why this was allowed but the information is available).

Comments regarding "nitpicking" and "punishing virtually all of Pine Point's other residents" directed at the Pine Point Residents Group are not unlike others made in the past, all without specific assertions to support the generalities such as "...challenged nearly every proposed change in Pine Point...." Councilor Michael Wood, whose name was invoked in the article, is an honorable and hard-working public official who has served the town on the Planning Board, and now the Council. He has responded sensitively to neighborhood concerns and had high praise for our group at the Council's June 18th meeting when it approved the proposal for a renewed study of area issues. Chairman Messer and other Council members have also stated publicly how well-organized and professional the Pine Point group has conducted itself during contentious times while other parties threatened litigation to the Town Council and only recently issued an ultimatum to the Council at the August 20<sup>th</sup> session relative to the appointment of Councilor Carol Rancourt to the Pine Point Study Committee.

For those who may not follow Pine Point issues closely, understand that every one of our neighborhood villages should organize for the purpose of staying informed. As with the recent Running Hill Rd. zoning issue, the Black Point Park controversy, sidewalks in Dunstan, solar panels, the unnecessary sale of a portion of Hurd Park in Pine Point and others, the absence of community involvement and activism results in uninformed citizens who REACT rather than "pro-act." The Residents Association has the good fortune of successfully lobbying a Town Council which has listened and acted, not always in favor of our positions, but at least we've been heard and kept others informed.

From almost four years of experience as a large, vocal group we assure you town administrators will take surprising actions and your Town Councilors are not always properly informed by their own employees, as was the case with the details of the road construction project in Pine Point. People must get involved even when it means condemnation by individuals who choose to criticize rather than become involved themselves. If there is, indeed, a large population representing “virtually all of Pine Point’s other residents” who feel they have been “punished,” then why have they not come forward publicly to present their positions to local officials?

The Higgins Beach Village has had an active and vocal association of residents for many years effectively making its collective views known. The Pine Point Residents Association was formed because of a controversy; the Lighthouse Motel wanted to build a 3 story, 48 foot high, eight-unit luxury condominium complex on a one-third (1/3) acre parcel. The owners proposed the Town swap land and accept a conveyance of a tiny piece of motel property from the highly-restricted shoreland zone in order to accomplish their objectives. Without knowing any other details, and there are many more, any reasonable person would be alarmed by a potentially major change to the character – and skyline – of Pine Point.

Approximately one hundred neighbors, citizens, renters, and others organized to speak with one voice, and worked assertively to ensure the final outcome was reasonable. The Pine Point Residents Association has stated publicly and on our website we supported the final 5-unit design of the project but are accused of causing its demise. The accusation is untrue.

When a group of citizens join in a common cause there is inevitably someone who will condemn their efforts. We have not allowed negative representations detract us from advocating for public involvement and open communication with our local government.

We continue to choose taking the high road by promoting open government, informing others of important issues, and promoting collective views on those issues. Our growing organization will continue to work with our public officials to effect the best possible decisions for the village of Pine Point and greater Scarborough community.

In closing, this statement also represents our introduction to three new Town Council members and a new Town Manager who we hope believes in active public participation in government. It is also a farewell to those who have served, shown respect and listened to voices other than just their own.

Judy Shirk, Sue Perrino, Judy Mushial, Dianne McLellan

Members of the Pine Point Residents Association