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Editor:

Pine Point is poised for more town government controversy as the Town Manager apparently is supportive of another one of the infamous "land swaps" of Scarborough's ocean front public property. It was five years ago to the day that one Town Councilor, Richard Sullivan (recently unseated for the second time in the past five years) whose same-night vote flip set in motion the permanent closing of our one of our town's few public roads to the shore. Depot Street, the fifty foot wide road which ran by the Lighthouse Motel provided public access to the beach for over 300 years. It was deeded to the Truman brothers, owners of the aging former motel-turned-condotel. The Trumans were essentially given the entire 50 foot wide public road in exchange for their crumbling 21-foot wide set of parking spaces across the street. There were serious violations regarding the Town process and lawyers, our State Representative and others cited the illegality of the disproportionate swap. A legal resolution would have cost residents tens of thousands to stop the give away and closing of the street which had been used by the public and fishermen for generations and therefore had a public easement. It was illegal gifting of public property to a private party in an exchange which gave the Trumans excess land well beyond the value of the land they swapped.

The Town Manager, brand new to our community at the time, did what former Town Manager Ron Owens refused to do- eliminate public access to the shore. Hundreds of citizens urged Mr. Hall and the Council at the time to vote against the swap but only three of the seven council members supported the public. As stated, it passed by Mr. Sullivan's one vote.

Two years before, in 2007, another very quiet land swap deal was brewing just down the road on King Street. The Wellehan Family, well-known and liked by their neighbors, own a cottage next to the municipal parking lot and proposed a similar swap of oceanfront property with the Town. It was quickly rejected as a plan that would eliminate another 50-foot town right-of-way to the beach and would have provided the owners with a significant windfall in value as they would be able to create a second buildable ocean view lot. Residents understand the Wellehan's effort to improve their aging cottage, but not at the expense of a permanent decision to swap or give away public land. This public property is a well-used access point for beachgoers, birders and residents, and is also a frontal dune rich with habitat. It is as wide as the Wellehan's lot and because they abut it would be ideal to

create a buildable lot if the Town gives it to them. What would we get in return? A portion of their 50' frontal dune, something we don't need to obtain since it is already forever protected due to its sensitive status.

In the past few years the Town has given away Depot Street, sold off a large building lot from the municipal parking lot on Avenue 4, discontinued access points to the river at Avenues Five and Six, and failed to provide appropriate "Public Beach Access" signs at all of Pine Point's precious public rights-of-way. While giving away public control of shorefront land at Pine Point, the Town Manager and Town Councils have worked to acquire property and expand beach amenities at Higgins Beach, an odd contradiction.

It's very wishful thinking this holiday season, but the Town would have enormous citizen support to spend public funds provided to the Land Trust to buy up farmland to purchase properties like the Lighthouse Motel or Wellehan property to add to what we have lost.

When the Ocean Spray Motel on Avenue Five Extension closed in the 1970's and the famous Pillsbury House on King Street became available for sale, forward thinking public officials had tremendous support to buy those properties. They are now the Hurd Park Municipal Facility which provides tens of thousands access to our shore and provides tremendous revenue to the Town. The Town Manager and Town Council are not even aware of this history. They should consider it and try to become forward thinking municipal leaders who will not abuse their power and dispose of our Town's shorefront property as the Council of 2009 did five years ago today.

Judy Shirk

Member of the Pine Point Residents Assn.