

Statement to the Town Council Concerning the Proposed Ordinance: 3/21/07

I would like to thank the members of the Town Council for the opportunity to speak on this proposed ordinance. My name is Judy Shirk and I live on Avenue 3 in Pine Point. I am also one of the leaders of the Pine Point Residents Group who came before you last fall about the Depot Street matter.

For Councilors Ahlquist and Sullivan, our Group has been working for the last two years on issues important to the Pine Point neighborhood. We became involved in the proposal put forth almost two years ago to convert the Lighthouse motel from 22 hotel rooms to five condominiums. This proposal went to the Zoning Board, but was ultimately withdrawn by the applicants. Our group, at that time, supported the proposal although we were urging the Town to set some reasonable conditions and negotiate a fair exchange of land in return for helping out the developers. This one proposal was, in my view, very complicated and required careful, thoughtful deliberation. In fact, the Town Council created an ad-hoc committee to address the many issues which came about. It points out that this is not a simple issue but one which can be very complex.

Our group has also been active in encouraging the Town to open Depot Street by removing the barricades that had been installed there for the past 18 summers. We appreciated the Town Council's decision to eliminate a large portion of that barricade so the public road to the beach would be more visible and accessible to the public. Finally, we were very active in developer Paul Hollis's efforts as he went through the approval process for the subdivision across the street from the Lighthouse Motel. The final outcome of that approval was the donation of a 3400 square foot parcel of land at the shore to the Town of Scarborough. This will be a great asset to the town in the future.

I am here tonight because this proposed ordinance is another issue, like those above, which could have a profound effect on our neighborhood. Our group of over 130 residents will want to offer our input to the Town Council just as we have on the other issues I mentioned. You've always listened to us and we appreciate that. But we have not had the time as a group to consider the complex issues that this ordinance presents, and we would like to gather more information so we can give you our feedback to consider.

We do know that there are several properties that rent rooms to the public and which are not conforming to the zone they are in. Some of these property owners may want to convert to condominiums. Others may not. In some cases a conversion might be very desirable and enhance the neighborhood. In other cases, due to the unique characteristics of a property, conversion might very negatively affect the character of the neighborhood. In fact, it might make the property inadvertently even more non-conforming.

There are so many variables to be considered. For example, has the property been rented year-round in the past or only rented during the tourist season? If units of a seasonal motel were individually owned, wouldn't it be likely that the owners would want to rent their units for the rest of the year, when in the past it was closed for the winter? Wouldn't that scenario have an impact the community, bringing in a new population of transient guests during the off season? Other questions come to mind. Do the units already have kitchen facilities? Is there sufficient on-site parking ? Just how non-conforming is the property compared to others as far as building lot coverage, road setbacks, and other zoning requirements. We need to have an ordinance that will set clear and specific standards and establish guidelines that govern which of these non-conforming businesses would be eligible to become more conforming through a conversion to condominiums, and which would not. One size does not fit all.

In closing, one of our group's consistent positions has been that it is important to gather information, involve the public, and communicate openly so we have good public policies. I can speak for the Residents Group when I urge you to refer this complicated issue to the Ordinance Committee and ask them to invite the public to participate in their process.

Thank you again for your time and for your service to our town.

Judy Shirk
Jack Callahan
John Thurlow
Harold Hutchinson