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Lighthouse Innowners set stage for new dispute

By Peggy Roberts

SCARBOROUGH – Owners of the Lighthouse Inn at 366 Pine Point Road have retained an attorney to clear a path for renovation of the property and sale of individual rooms to the general public.

Under the town’s zoning ordinance, hotel and motel units like those proposed may be occupied by the same individual for no more than 186 days in any 365-day period.

In a letter to Scarborough Code Enforcement Officer David Grysk dated July 25, Attorney Robert E. Danielson of Danielson & Gonzalez states that “single unit ownership of a hotel/motel structure has precedent in the town and even in this district.” He referred to the former Rest Point Motel at 9 East Grand Ave., whose rooms were converted to single-unit ownership. Grysk was not available for comment.

The letter requests confirmation that the owners need no permits or approvals from the town to proceed with the desired changes.

But according to Town Manager Ron Owens, the town’s position is that the conversion does represent a change of use.

“As a change of use it needs to go to the board of appeals,” he said. “They will consider the ramifications on the neighborhood and infrastructure.”

This recent letter has some Pine Point-area residents upset.

A year ago, a plan to convert the 22-unit motel into six condominiums met with strong opposition from these residents, who were concerned that the change would alter the neighborhood’s character. The group met with the owners, Peter and Nick Truman, along with the architects from Portland-based Port City Architecture.

Now the Trumans have dismissed that original plan in favor of selling the 22 individual units.

According to Nick Truman, while these units will be totally renovated with new flooring, walls, windows and doors, no changes to the inn’s exterior appearance or structure will be made. In addition, other than the refrigerators, microwaves and sinks that are already in the rooms, no kitchens will be added.

Truman said he and his family are upset by the “hate group against the Lighthouse Inn.”

“For two years they’ve been attacking us on anything we’ve proposed,” he said, referring to the Pine Point residents group, which communicates largely by e-mails.

Though John Thurlow, who alerted the group regarding the Trumans’ plan, could not be reached for comment, his recent message to the residents questions the motive for Truman’s latest proposal. It refers to a meeting last summer when an architect “made a statement ... to the effect that we (the neighbors) wouldn’t want to see ‘22 units there’ implying that this very thing could occur.”

“At the time,” the message continues, “it was suggested to him (the architect) that such a proposition could be viewed as scare tactics. ... Yet here we are. Is this a way to alert the Town to what might happen if what

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they perceive as roadblocks continue?"

The Truman family has owned the property on both sides of Depot Street and operated the inn since 1958. Saying the decision to sell off units is "nobody's business" but the family's, Truman said he intends to use the legal system to ensure his rights as an owner.

"I don't care if the Pine Point Association likes me," he said. "I'm making my livelihood."

The Pine Point Residents Group plans to discuss what they see as the problems of the Lighthouse Inn's proposal at their next meeting. Originally scheduled for Aug. 15, the meeting has been moved to Thursday, Aug. 17, at 7 p.m. at the Pine Point Fire Station.

Peggy Roberts can be reached at 781-3661 ext. 125 or proberts@theforecaster.net.