Gmail

Village of Northport Clerk <clerk@villageofnorthport.net>

FW: Public Hearing to Consider Seventh Street Property

1 message

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Dear Mr. Dyer and Ms. Scott:

Please include this email in the meeting packet for the March 7, 2024 Village of Northport Council public hearing to address the Seventh Street property. Please also include this communication in the Seventh Street Dropbox.

Also, I was unable to locate a notice for the public hearing. What is the protocol for public comment, questions and answers, etc.?

Thank you.

Dear Village of Northport Council Members:

Greetings to you. I am writing to again express my views relating to the options presented to the Council for the Seventh Street property. I urge you to allow this property to remain in its natural state, as was intended when it was gifted to the Village many years ago.

Our home is on North Shore Drive, directly across the street from this property. As others have explained in prior correspondence, we have been privileged over the years to observe the wide variety of wildlife that inhabits this wetlands property. The wetlands drain through underground culverts that proceed through the properties of North Shore residents and empty into Northport Bay. I first wrote to the Council and Planning Commission members on November 9, 2021, expressing my opposition to a plan to subdivide this property, and either develop and sell the parcels or designate a developer to do so. At that time, many steps had already been taken to implement this plan, including surveying and staking of the parcels, obtaining estimates to harvest and remove trees, contacting utilities regarding connection fees, and obtaining estimates for the construction of a road through the property (which had already been named “Maude Court”). This Council appropriately slowed down this process to obtain public input and conduct further investigation. The Planning Commission was charged with this task.

I greatly respect and appreciate the time and effort the Planning Commission has devoted to this important issue and the opportunity it has provided over the past two years for public

input. The compilation that the Planning Commission has provided to you contains many of my written communications, and those of my four children (all adults now). I continue to advocate the points made in our prior communications but will not unduly lengthen this letter by repetition. I trust you will take the time to review these letters and those of the many other residents who have urged that the property be maintained in its natural state. The reasons are as critical today as ever, including the observations in the Village of Northport's own Master Plan. In adopting that Plan, this Council recognized that wetlands were threatened and required protection:

> *"Wetlands are areas where water is found, either on or near the surface, at any time during the year. They provide vital ecological services, including sediment retention, filtration and groundwater recharge, flood mitigation, and wildlife habitat; and also support recreational activities ... They function best when maintained in large, continuous acreages.*
>
> *Despite their many ecological benefits, wetlands face a number of threats related to development and land use; they have historically been dredged, drained, or filled in order to create more or improved development opportunities ...*

There are many examples of the devastation that results when the value of wetlands is disregarded. I live in Grosse Pointe Farms a couple of blocks from Lake St. Clair in southeastern Michigan. Just north of us in St. Clair Shores, developers built on marshy areas and wetlands to create neighborhoods with canal access to the lake. At various times over the years, these areas have been subject to flooding and contamination; some of the beaches along the lake have been closed due to high e-coli counts. When we wonder why, I can only hark back to the removal of nature's built-in filtration systems and reservoirs – destruction of the surrounding wetlands.

The Wall Street Journal ran an article a number of years ago about a plan the City of Detroit had been contemplating to deal with water overflows and filtration. The plan was to create wetland marshes on vacant and abandoned stretches of property within the City to augment the City's water filtration and retention systems. I included with my prior correspondence articles which address this important function that occurs naturally on the Seventh Street property.

There has been mention of using this land for affordable workforce housing. I recall that one recent letter even suggested that the Village donate the land for that purpose. I think it goes without saying that given the location, any development on this property will not be "affordable." Nor will its development significantly enhance the finances of the sewer system. I fully concur with the comments made by Greg Nobles in his February 13, 2024 letter to you.

And so I am wondering, how will you make this important decision?

- Will you consider the science which supports wetlands preservation?
- Will you retain an independent expert to counsel you on these issues?
- Will you call upon EGLE and the Leelanau County Conservation District experts before considering the options that call for development?
- What will you prioritize in your decision-making process?
- How will you determine the effect of development on air and water quality and wildlife in this area?

- How will you determine the effect on neighboring landowners, several of whom have spent thousands of dollars to remediate and protect the crawl spaces and foundations of their homes from water intrusion and mold.
- Assuming the Village has an easement for the drainage culverts that run through our properties, won't the drainage burden increase with development and wouldn't that increased burden be outside the contemplation of the easements?
- If workforce housing is to be a factor in your decision, will you consider other parcels of Village-owned property that do not risk the environmental destruction that will occur here? What other parcels does the Village own?
- Hasn't the City already approved a development at the golf course to provide for affordable housing?

In closing, I refer you to the action of the Suttons Bay Planning Commission which is considering an ordinance designed to protect valuable wetlands resources within the Village limits after experiencing the negative results of altering wetlands areas within the Village. Wouldn't that be a commendable endeavor for Northport to consider as well?

Sincerely,

Joanne Geha Swanson