

TO: Northampton County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors

FROM: Art Schwarzschild 4231 Willis Wharf Rd.

RE: Zoning in Waterfront Villages

DATE: 08/06/14

If you are going to reference something to make a difference, be accurate. These words were spoken by Eyre Baldwin last night after he read a prepared statement to the Planning Commission. In his statement Mr. Baldwin indicated that his plans to develop property in Oyster were being thwarted by what he believes is an overly restrictive zoning ordinance and repeatedly stated that he could not even legally rent kayaks or small boats on the property. When I returned home after the meeting I went on the county website to check the zoning use tables and determine if this was in fact correct. It is NOT. Please note that in the Category 5, Marine Related Uses section of the Waterfront Village Zoning Table as published on the County website, Boat Sales/Rentals are listed as permitted by Special Use Permit (SUP) in the Commercial areas of the Waterfront Village Zoning District. This means that Mr. Baldwin can, in fact, rent boats from his property if he simply applies for a SUP which I feel certain would be approved.

I would like to note, for the record, that during my time working with a citizens group from Willis Wharf and Oyster which helped develop the Waterfront Village Zoning District, I do not recall any discussion to limit the ability of businesses to sell/rent boats in the commercial areas of the waterfront villages. Furthermore, I have personally stated during workshops and public meetings with both the PC and BOS (and during private meetings with Mr. Baldwin) that I truly believe the communities of Willis Wharf and Oyster would benefit from additional marine related services near the public boat ramps. These services could include things like a fuel dock, bait/tackle shop, marina store, and lunch counter/small restaurant. All items Mr. Baldwin indicates he would like to include on his property in Oyster.

From my reading of the county zoning tables for the Waterfront Village zoning district, all of the above mentioned uses are allowable in the commercial area. True, some of these uses require obtaining a SUP, but this is only reasonable in order to make certain that the installations meet all required state and local guidelines and do not negatively impact neighboring properties and businesses.

As the Chairman of the Willis Wharf Village Steering Committee I would like to take this opportunity to once again state, for the record, that

the residents and property owners of Willis Wharf are NOT against development in our village or along our waterfront. We do, however, greatly desire that any such development be in harmony with our Village Vision Statement.

As a reminder, the Willis Wharf and Oyster Vision Statements were created through a lengthy process of public meetings and consensus building, facilitated by paid planning/development advisers and approved by the citizens and property owners of Willis Wharf and Oyster. After adoption by the Willis Wharf and Oyster Communities and a series of public meetings/hearings before the PC and BOS, both village Vision Statements were incorporated into the county comprehensive plan.

The heart of the Willis Wharf Village Vision statement is:

Willis Wharf hopes to remain a small, distinct seaside village that retains its own identity and determines its own destiny while:

- 1) maintaining the pristine quality of the ground and surface waters and other natural resources in and around the community as part of daily life.
- 2) supporting its residents and local economy with traditional seafood, farming and related industries that are clean, environmentally low impact and ecologically sound.
- 3) Preserving its traditional village character along with its rich natural and cultural heritage through gradual growth that protects surrounding rural open spaces with well planned, managed and compatible development.

I do not see how any of this statement can be seen as a road-block to the efforts Mr. Baldwin claims to support in developing his property in Oyster. Rather, I would hope it can be a road-map to help guide him in his efforts.

Lastly, I understand that some members of the PC, BOS and County Staff have determined that the SUP process is too onerous for citizens and businesses to undertake. As a result the proposed zoning amendment removes the SUP requirement for many uses, and allows many uses by right in districts/areas which they were either not permitted or permitted only after obtaining a SUP. Please know that in developing the Waterfront Village Zoning designation citizens, property owners and business representatives from both Willis Wharf and Oyster went line by line through the usage table to determine which uses they believed were appropriate for our villages and where in agreement with our vision statements. The zoning designation was then vetted through a series of public meetings in front of the PC and BOS before being adopted by the county and incorporated into the county's zoning ordinance. Should you stand firm in your resolution to remove the Waterfront Village Zoning district I sincerely hope that you will very carefully review the list

of uses to ensure that only truly water dependent uses be permitted by right in the waterfront portions of our Waterfront Villages.

Thank you for your consideration and all the work you do for the citizens of Northampton County.

Art Schwarzschild
4231 Willis Wharf Rd.
Chairman Willis Wharf Village Steering Committee