

The Sag Harbor Express.

Report Threatens to Kill Ferry Road Condos

Posted on 31 July 2009



Sag Harbor Building Inspector Timothy Platt has weighed in on the proposed luxury waterfront condominiums known as Ferry Road deeming them “not compliant” with the new village code, effectively ending the planning board’s review of the most recent proposal for the project.

Michael Maidan, Emil Telal and a group of investors under the limited liability corporation East End Ventures have proposed 18 waterfront condos with 18 accessory boat slips on a parcel of waterfront adjacent to the Lance Cpl. Jordan Haerter Veterans Memorial Bridge. Since it was first proposed over two years ago, the project has changed a number of times, the most recent incarnation in front of the Sag Harbor Planning Board, which is leading the village’s review of the proposed development.

In a July 17 letter to the planning board, Platt notes the proposed condo project includes units less than 3,500 square feet, while the code mandates a minimum of 7,260, is three stories tall, where the code only allows two-story structures and is short seven parking spaces. The project lacks two separate entrance and exit driveways, utilizing just one, which is also against the code, and does not meet criteria for external lighting fixtures.

Under the new code, the condos must receive a special exception permit from the village in order to be constructed. A special exception permit, granted by the planning board, can only be given if the project meets all code requirements.

On Tuesday, July 28 the planning board passed a resolution accepting Platt’s letter and asking East End Ventures to notify the village on whether to cancel a scheduled August 10 public hearing on the project.

While the project has been met with public opposition, Tuesday night’s resolution was adopted in front of a crowd of one, project manager Mark D’Andrea, who is also managing the company’s approved condominiums on West Water Street – now under construction.

After the meeting, D’Andrea said Platt’s letter did not come as a surprise.

“It’s not out of the blue, it’s par for the course,” he said. “It is what the village was trying to do the whole time – adopt a quick and speedy code that would deny East End Ventures.”

D'Andrea went on to charge that the village has a history of chasing away developers citing the vacant former Bulova Watchcase Factory as a prime example.

"Look at all their handiwork when it comes to Bulova," he said. "They chased away a perfectly fine development firm and ended up with a boarded-up mess. At this point, especially in a village like this, to turn down thousands of jobs and money with the condition this country's economy is in, someone must not be paying attention to what is going on."

Last fall, the planning board approved Sag Development Partners application for 65-luxury condominiums in the former Bulova Watchcase Factory. Following the approval of the application, the developers announced they were still seeking financing for the project and the factory building has continued to lay dormant since.

According to D'Andrea, what the future holds regarding the Ferry Road condo project is now in the hands of its attorneys.

"And they are very capable hands," said D'Andrea. "I am sure if there is any malfeasance or a hidden agenda behind this, East End Ventures will be victorious."

D'Andrea said no matter what may occur in coming months, that both Telal and Maidan are still committed to a project at the Ferry Road site.

"They want to make it something that inspires people to visit," he said. "I know they would never build blight."

"I think the truth will come out that they tried to put this code in place to hurt East End Ventures instead of working together to get what they wanted out of the project," D'Andrea later added.

On Wednesday morning, Sag Harbor Village Trustee Tiffany Scarlato, who spearheaded the zoning code revision, called D'Andrea's claims about the new code "patently false," noting a code revision has been in discussion for three or four years, long before this application came to the forefront.

The village formally began working on a new zoning code about two-and-a-half-years ago, with concepts at the core of the planning and zoning document unveiled in 2007 and a first draft made public in 2008.

Trustees said the code aimed to preserve the historic character of Sag Harbor's commercial district, update and streamline an antiquated code unable to meet demands placed on the village and address public outcry over the possibility of big box stores finding a home in the mom-and-pop centric village. The last time the village code was updated was in the early 1980s.

"Obviously, what he is saying is patently false and the re-writing of the zoning code was in the works well before this application came to the forefront, so he is clearly wrong," said Scarlato.

"I don't think any member of the village board knows the specifics of what they are asking for," Scarlato continued. "I don't think any member of the village board has even looked at their plans. All code amendments were done to bring our code up to date with neighboring codes already in existence. To make this allegation is just wrong. All we did was bring our code up to date and in line with those codes utilized by other municipalities for years."