

CONCERNED CITIZENS AND FRIENDS OF THE UNION STREET/WASHINGTON STREET EXTENSION NEIGHBORHOOD have carefully examined the several announcements and ‘Open Letters’ which the developers of the proposed Great Harbor Yacht Club (GHYC) recently have published in the Nantucket press. This recent media ‘campaign’ may indicate that the developers are anxious to truthfully communicate with the residents of the Island about their plan – or it may indicate that the developers are in trouble.

These ‘Notices’ begin with the pronouncement that the “owners of the Great Harbor Yacht Club are anxious to set the record straight” or similar words to that effect. There is no GHYC – it is a proposed plan – its developers have not received a single permit, license, exception, waiver or other indicia of Town approval – it is a plan, and a plan which is vigorously opposed in a Petition, which thus far, has been signed by more than 1,000 residents of Nantucket. It is not a ‘done deal’ – indeed, very far from it. And there is a very real probability that it will never be built.

Following are a few statements made by the developers to us the public (in quotes), and our group’s response:

- “Great Harbor Yacht Club will provide tremendous public benefit at no cost to the taxpayer.”

The developers tell us that if developed and constructed as proposed, GHYC would, “be paying more than \$250,000 a year in town taxes” and that “All the above is at no cost to taxpayers.” The town and the taxpayers will indeed be subsidizing this project in the form of land and water grants, as well as relief and exceptions to various portions of the zoning code. The developers appear to be asking for exceptions involving storm water processing. Instead of providing for storm water containment on the project’s own land, it appears that the developers will be using the town’s wetlands. The 79 boat slip floating dock is located on water which does not appear to be part of the developers’ water rights. This public water now comprises a channel used by all, as well as public moorings. Noted in recent real estate transfers was a single slip on Old North Wharf having been conveyed for \$2 Million. Even assuming that these proposed slips at GHYC are only worth \$100,000 each, then there is a specific value being enjoyed by the developers of nearly \$8 Million. Finally, there is the location of the proposed lift on property now owned by the Town.

Again, it is simply a matter of counter-balance and scale. On the one hand there is a promise of the payment of \$250,000 in taxes and the existence of a project at no cost to the Nantucket taxpayer and in the opposing balance, there are zoning concessions, use of town wetlands, use of public waterways, and perhaps use of town land – and that balance does not tip in favor of the taxpayer. P.S. \$250,000 is about the price of a single membership!

- “Great Harbor Yacht Club Provides Public Access to the Waterfront” and “Great Harbor will construct a public walkway that will run along the entire waterfront of the yacht club and connect back to Washington Street Extension.”

Currently, GHYC does not provide public access to the waterfront as the club does not yet exist. All such promises of access in the future need to be in writing as in easements, agreements recordable and enforceable.

However, such proposals and promises would be public benefits, and ones, which would certainly be expected to accompany any extensive redevelopment of the site as is required under by law under Chapter 91.

What is not generally known is that the walkway is located at the foot of a massive 6-foot high pedestal that is being proposed by the developers. This pedestal will be held back by a retaining wall 6 feet higher than the existing grade.

Placing this huge building on top on of a concrete and earth filled pedestal is in total disregard of the existing scale on the waterfront and it shows lack of sensitivity to the community. The offering of a public walkway beneath the elevated proposed GHYC is a hollow gesture.

- "It is important to the Town of Nantucket that the Great Harbor Property stay in Marine use and that has always been the intention of Great Harbor's Developers"

The Boatyard property has served the public since 1917. We're glad that the Great Harbor Developers always intended a marine use, because they in fact bought a boat yard. To successfully change the use of the property will require a number of special permits by the Planning Board which may or may not be granted. The only by-right use of the property at the present time, without going through the Town's Boards and Commissions for specific permission, is to continue the "grandfathered" use as a boatyard. Any demolition of current improvements to the property must be approved by the HDC. The HDC has not granted any such approvals. Any intensification or change of use is subject to approval by our Town's Boards and Commissions, which are there to insure that what happens on that site is in the best interest of the community.

Usually when a project of this scope is contemplated, the property, which will undergo the change of use after clearing all hurdles of community scrutiny and permits, is put under contract with the proviso that the sale will take place only if these permits are granted. The developers of the planned GHYC chose to go ahead and purchase a boatyard, without any permits or licenses, contemplating a change of use into a 333 seat restaurant bar and grill and banquet hall, plus a health club, pool facility, retail store, and boat maintenance facility. The developers may not have anticipated the objections of abutters and other neighbors and Island residents. They may have assumed that the plan was capable of being pushed through. They have certainly gone out of their way to present the GHYC as a 'done deal'. It is not.

- "This development will benefit the community as a whole as well as the club members."

We have read about high school students being able to use the squash courts, and the sailing team being able to use moorings and public walkways to the waterfront. Damage to the neighborhood and the harbor, discussed below, cannot ever be ignored simply because a few alleged benefits are dangled before the Island citizenry. As an aside, the high school advises that the offer of the use of squash courts is interesting but points out that there is no desire to develop competitive squash players (who would they play against?). This is an excellent

example of the developers having very little understanding of our community . This all appears to be going on in a virtual cocoon.

- "Great Harbor is an excellent example of the coexistence of a yacht club and a public marine facility."

The Great Harbor proposal is an excellent example of over-reaching, insensitivity and arrogance. Great Harbor Yacht Club does not yet exist at the site of the boatyard. There is presently a boatyard in the location that the developers refer to. At best it (GHYC) is an example of an idea whose future and fate are in the hands of our Town's Boards and Commissions.

- "The community benefits of this project are clear and of true significance to Nantucket, namely; Great Harbor Yacht Club will permanently deed community marine service on the site, including fuel, pump out, maintenance and storage. Grey Lady Marine will be the first such marine provider. The public nature of these marine services may not be retracted by the yacht club."

This all sounds great, except, the developers once again have carefully chosen their words. First, the statement assumes that the site can support all the uses that are contemplated. The present use of a boatyard seems to utilize most of the site in order to accomplish these functions now.

What isn't widely known is that although Grey Lady Marine is perceived to be locally owned and operated, that business was recently purchased by the developers. The Yacht Club and the Marine service via Grey Lady Marine are both commonly controlled by the Developer into the foreseeable future. The yacht club does not need to retract marine services to the public; Grey Lady Marine can do that without the yacht club. The Grey Lady Marine business we have all come to know and depend on has been sold – it has the same name, but new owners with different policies .

- "Grey Lady Marine's travel lift is the only one on Nantucket and is vital for removing boats from the harbor on an emergency basis. Great Harbor seeks to expand the width of the travel lift on site so as to accommodate the U.S. Coast Guard cutter and other large boats that require repairs or refuge. The use of this travel lift to the benefit of the community's needs will be maintained, not eliminated."

We agree that the travel lift is vital to Nantucket now and in the future. It is simply a life and safety issue to insure that we can adequately as a community service the local fleet and large number of visiting boats. In fact it is essential to this Island's maritime future to maintain the potential of a working waterfront. We agree that the expansion of the width of the travel lift is increasingly important, as boats in general have increased in size and beam in recent years. We understand that already there will be a lessening of services available to boaters based here. We have heard that tuna towers will no longer be allowed, masts will no longer be stepped, and other services that have happened at the facility will no longer be available. This is due to lack of space we are told. In light of this concern, we have to ask, where will all of these boat go in the event of a major storm? GHYC will not have the capacity to accommodate the boats the boatyard has accommodated in the past. The land is being used for club facilities.

- **“Great Harbor has offered SHAB boat slips for resident scallopers during scallop season at a minimal cost.”**

We are sure that the scallopers appreciate the offer, however, the town pier still has space, and the boatyard end of the harbor is the first to ice up, so the offer of use of docks may be of limited use. Scallopers we talk to have much bigger worries. What is much more important to scallopers is the proposal for the construction of the floating pier and the accompanying dredging which it will require. Developers are contemplating dredging close to two acres of the harbor in order to accommodate the dock plan.

The developers appear to have incomplete or inaccurate information on the shellfish habitat issue. They have stated that there is little in the way of shellfish habitat. Tell that to the scallopers who have been getting their limits fishing in their proposed floating dock area, and all the recreational scallopers who have scalloped in the same area over the years.

The Town has sent their own divers to check the developer's results. Preliminary indications are that there is much more eelgrass and many more shellfish, combined with a far more intricate biological balance, than the developer's report led us to believe.

- **“Nantucket High School's sailing team will use the facilities' docks, piers and launches during the school year to train the next generation of sailors.”**

Community Sail has taken this responsibility in the past. Perhaps this really isn't an additional benefit; it would come under community sail (NCS).

- **“Great Harbor has offered to build a floating dingy dock for the community”**

Where will this dingy dock be located? Will there be parking provided? Will these facilities in fact be on yacht club land or town land?

- **‘Great Harbor has also offered to build a community boat ramp so residents can launch their own boats at the end of Washington Street Extension at no cost.’**

We understand that the developers are offering to build a community boat ramp on Town Land; in fact, on Town owned wetlands. The facts are that their project includes town land that they haven't acknowledged that they are using. The developers, in effect, are looking for an outright grant of lands owned by the town and county without compensating the citizens. And in effect, they are taking, without compensation to the town and its citizens, over one acre of harbor water for private use, forever. Is this boat ramp construction and dingy dock adequate compensation for land and water worth many millions of dollars?

- **"Great Harbor's marine facilities will continue to be available to the community during times of natural disasters. Grey Lady Marine recently removed more than 100 boats from the water in the face of Hurricane Isabelle. Great Harbor will continue this commitment."**

We are glad to know that the Developers recognize the important role that the Boatyard has

played for almost 100 years in providing essential public services to the community. Providing removal services for boats in face of hurricanes has historically been one of the ways that the boatyard has repeatedly proved its essential nature.

But we are also confused by this statement of assurance by the developer. They have stated above that the Yacht Club would have no control over the marine operator yet here they seem to indicate that they do. It would seem reasonable that they would, as boats would have to be placed over parking lots, flower beds, all kinds of finished areas that we imagine will be owned by the club. Where will they put all the boats now that much of the site will be developed and unavailable for boat storage? In such an emergency, boats are put everywhere, but everywhere in this case we imagine will be groomed, and lit, and landscaped. How much damage to its parking lots, its landscaping and lighting will this private club tolerate? How much room will be left for boat storage in the case of a hurricane?

This one example begs the question if the two uses really are compatible; or is the developer just saying so in order to get his plans approved. The developers are not clear about this scenario -- how it would actually work. Yet we are talking about essential services, the crux of it all. Perhaps the developers believe that they should remain somewhat unclear on this issue until one is able to determine the 'direction of the wind'.

- **"Washington Street Extension will be improved for the community by removing unsightly utility poles that currently impede access and burying the wires. "**

Washington Street Extension was already slated to get its utility wires buried, In fact work had already begun at the end of the street before the yacht club was even announced. Because of the massive amount of power that will be needed to run the yacht club, we are quite sure that the electrical infrastructure will have to be rebuilt, just sooner than had been anticipated. So even as neglected as the neighborhood has been, that improvement was already on its way.

- **"Great Harbor will also install a new drainage system that is both good for the environment and solves the street's flooding problem.**

Again, in a major development of this type, it is customary to provide storm water management. We would expect the developers to resize pipes, and take care of their project's storm water runoff. However the developers are planning to off-load their storm water to town owned wetlands for storm water containment and processing rather than handling it on their own site.

Yes, there is already a flooding problem in the neighborhood. That's why we are so concerned with the proposed development and the changes that are proposed to the elevations. As previously mentioned, the plan calls for the installation of fill of between one and six feet over the entire site. It seems that the developers plan to tear everything down, then put in an unsightly concrete and fill plug of up to 6 feet of fill on the water side, and then at least a foot of fill everywhere else on the land side across the street. To the neighbors, this means that the GHYC land will be higher than all the abutter's land. We neighbors know that water doesn't usually run up hill, so we are very concerned that our land isn't flooded as a result of the

GYHC land being raised, and stopping the natural surface drainage that happens here. The developers' response to our flooding concerns has been that it is a town problem.

As you know, this area was a combination of fresh water springs and a salt marsh. The whole area is a semi-liquid environment.

- “Great Harbor's design provides ample parking for its members”

We can't believe that they make this claim. "Ample" is defined as "more than enough, abundant". The developers' proposal to construct a 333 seat restaurant, bar and grill operation, along with additional banquet facilities, a sports barn, a boat maintenance building, a pool house with a retail store, an office, and a dormitory building capable of holding 40+ people and then add to this the proposed 79 slip floating dock and 37 valet boat slips -- and the alleged responsible response regarding parking places is that the developer will provide 104 parking spaces. This for a facility that will service 400 families, or by our estimation about 1600 people on a regular basis. Their 104 parking spaces won't even be enough to meet federal minimum standards for parking to accompany the boat slips alone.

- “A traffic expert has developed a plan that will minimize traffic congestion. There will be two ways to enter and exit the facility so no single area will bear the brunt of traffic. “

Hello, is anybody home? Yes, they hired a traffic expert as they are required to do. They have essentially come up with an expert's conclusion that the traffic is already so bad, that adding a little more won't make it that much worse. It seems that this is the kind of logic that seems to permeate this project. The closer you look, the worse it gets.

CONCLUSION: *GHYC, as currently proposed, is a bad and ill conceived idea. Some plans should not be approved. This is one such plan. They simply didn't think it through – or – they assumed that we the Town would step aside, and cave in. That won't happen. Our Island is precious. Our waterfront is unique and fragile. We Must Protect It!*

If you are interested in supporting and joining our efforts, sign our petitions, display a bumper sticker, most importantly attend the meetings of the Planning Board and Conservation Commission and voice your concerns. Also, watch this newspaper for an announcement of a public meeting to learn more about this project, the regulatory review that it faces, and what we can do about it. Contact us at (508) 825-2037 or at new website www.SaveOurWaterfront.com.

Paid for by Charlie Sayle Jr. on behalf of CCFUSWSEN.