



Seldovia Gazette

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2 Cents Worth:

We are working on a different format for the 2 Cents Worth section . . .

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Letters to the Editor

PEGGY G. BOSCACCI
P. O. Box 278
236 Harbor View Drive
Seldovia, AK 99663
(907) 234-7803

January 23,2006

Kurt Reynertson, City Manager
Dick Wyland, Mayor and
Members of the Seldovia City Council
PO Drawer B
Seldovia, AK 99663

RE: Rezoning of Lots Along Main Street

Dear Kurt, Dick and City Council Members:

Although I've only lived in Seldovia on a permanent basis for a little over 14 years, my family has deep roots here. My father, Fleming J. Giles, first moved to this area in the late 1940's, with other family members following in the early 1950's. For the most part, all of our family has been, and continue to be, involved in the commercial fishing business.

From being a kid trying to walk the railings along the old boardwalk, to working summers in the shrimp and salmon canneries, and to being a business owner along Main Street, I think I'm qualified to speak about some of the changes that have occurred over the last 50

years or so.

A lot of us, including many council members, have seen and experienced the slow economic downfall that has taken place in Seldovia over all of these years. This city has gone from a bustling fishing village and the major shipping port of the Kenai Peninsula, to a retirement and recreation and tourist destination community. And the lack of a viable economic base has almost become a death knell to our once populace school.

Now I realize that we're all here because we care about what happens to Seldovia economically, as well as socially, etc. I'm sure we all have visions of what Seldovia could be, or maybe should be. And I also know that in order to accomplish ANY goals, we need to pull together as council members and as citizens to make sure that Seldovia develops a viable economic future.

HOWEVER, and this is a big however, I personally think, and this is just my opinion only, that the rezoning that was passed at the last city council's special meeting, defeats the purpose for which it was intended. And it is pitting citizen against citizen, controversy we do not need. We need unity, not division.

Years ago, the existing Planning Commission spent many months working diligently to come forth with a workable zoning plan to satisfy the needs of the citizens and business people of this community. To arbitrarily change the existing zoning is a slap in the face to that Planning Commission and all their hard work. But more importantly, the reasons behind the rezoning change don't add up.

As I understand it, a few people think that by changing the zoning, we will eliminate the possibility of someone building just a residence, or someone turning an existing building into just a residence along Main Street. And the reason that is a bad thing is because the city would not be garnering its rightful sales tax dollars from just a residence. And if the residents themselves are exempt from property taxes, the city gets nothing.

We already have the problem of noncompliance on several lots in the Commercial Marine zoning on the bay side of Main Street. This zoning change just adds more noncompliant properties to our list. Are we going to 'grandfather' all of the existing property uses? And if so, what will that accomplish? You defeat the reason for the change. And making exceptions to the rule is not a viable alternative, either. You just open up the city for a lawsuit. Can the city afford to defend itself from ANY lawsuit that might come its way? I don't think so. And as a City Councilperson, I want to avoid any litigation.

In my experience, most rezoning is done for two major reasons. The first is to remove and/or revitalize blighted areas in a community. The second is because an economic demand warrants a change. Neither of these, to my knowledge, has occurred as yet in Seldovia, therefore the rezoning was inappropriate and unwarranted at this time. And remember, as admirable as it may seem to have a 'pure' business district, filled with retail, service or other qualifying business operators, the city cannot force those businesses to remain open all year. That is at the discretion of each proprietor. And even if we create this business district, that doesn't mean that people are going to come and open new businesses.

I would like to see this City Council place this issue back on the agenda for further review and scrutiny. We do not need to be defending ourselves against a possible lawsuit at this or any time.

Thank you for listening to my comments.

Peggy Giles Boscacci

The Seldovia Gazette values freedom of speech. We welcome original, insightful letters from our readers on issues that are of concern to them. However, due to space considerations, please limit letters to 300 words. We also reserve the right to edit all letters for clarity, grammar, and taste. Letters must be signed and submitted by Tuesday at 5 pm in order to be printed in that week's press. We accept letters submitted by one of three ways: by email at tomg@seldovia.com or maryg@seldovia.com, by fax at 907-234-7526, or by mail at Seldovia Gazette, P.O. Box 97, Seldovia, Alaska 99663.

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