

TOWN OF OLD ORCHARD BEACH
Wednesday, June 25, 2014
TOWN COUNCIL WORKSHOP
6:30 p.m.

A Town Council Workshop of the Old Orchard Beach Town Council was held on Wednesday, June 25, 2014. Chair O'Neill opened the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

The following were in attendance:

Chair Shawn O'Neill
Vice Chair Bob Quinn
Councilor Malorie Pastor
Councilor Joseph Thornton
Councilor Kenneth Blow
Councilor Jay Kelley
Town Manager Larry Mead
Assistant Town Manager, V. Louise Reid

Absent: Councilor Michael Tousignant

The purpose of the workshop this evening is to discuss and review the issue of properties being rented and presenting issues relative to either clients or the business itself. The issue relates to a quality of life issue for many in the community. The purpose of the workshop this evening is promote proud and safe neighborhoods; enhance the quality of life; improve the Old Orchard Beach image and reputation; attract more year-round residents; and grow the tax base.

The term "quality of life" is used to indicate the general well-being of people and societies. It is often associated with the term "standard of living" but the two do not necessarily mean the same. A standard of living merely is the evaluation of the wealth and employment status of a person in a society. Though both are factors to determine quality of life, these are not its sole indicator. A person's environment, physical and mental health, education, recreation, social well-being, freedom, human rights and happiness also are significant factors. The quality of life is measured in a variety of contexts including the level of wealth, comfort, material goods and necessities available to a certain socioeconomic class in a certain geographic area. The standard of living includes factors such as income, quality and availability of employment, class disparity, poverty rate, quality and affordability of housing, hours of work required to purchase necessities, gross domestic product, inflation rate, number of vacation days per year, affordable access to quality health care, quality and availability of education, life expectancy, incidence of disease, cost of goods and services, infrastructure, national economic growth, economic and political stability, political and religious freedom, environmental quality, climate and safety. The standard of living is closely related to quality of life.

To Promote Proud and Safe Neighborhoods for our Residents and Businesses:

Problematic Housing – often winter rentals;
Going on for too many years;

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**Transient Tenants;
Demand on municipal services;
Absentee Landlords.**

Reduces Property values.

Unstable Neighborhoods

Direct adverse effect to proud and safe neighborhoods.

Housing/Lodging Infrastructure:

Summer Season for Tourists.

Lower cost long-term winter rentals.

**Attracts large numbers of transient people who are on the move and never become part
of the community.
High demand for services.**

Public Safety Issues

Chronic and Repeated Calls for service of Police and EMS

**Illegal drug activity;
Domestic disputes;
Intoxication;
Vandalism;
Destruction of Property;
Transport to Hospitals;
Physical confrontation;
Tenant/Landlord Disputes;
Serving of Protection Orders, Subpoenas, Warrants.**

Code Issues

**Overcrowding of rental units;
Seasonal versus year-round licensing;
Incorrectly licensed for current business practices;
Health and life safety violations.**

Effects of These issues

Community Impact – Tax Dollars

Drain on the Town Resources

**Police, Rescue, Code and Town Administration;
Excessive calls for service;
Strain on the school system.**

Poor Town Image;

Fewer People Choosing to Move to OOB

Fewer Families

Decreased Tax Base

Diminished Quality of Life.

Neighborhoods Diminished Quality of Life

Neighborhood Deteriorates

Lack of respect for People and Property

Littering/debris and property damage

Noise at all hours – constant interruption of sleep

Negative influence on children – exposed to negative elements

Instills fear of retaliation in neighborhood therefore residents-fear reporting

Diminished neighborhood pride.

Impact on Business

Bad hospitality experience negatively reflects on all businesses and OOB's reputation.

Word spreads quickly.

Trip Advisor, Face Book, Twitter;

Quality Tourists and events go elsewhere

Discourages potential future business owners and residents from relocating to Town.

Our Goal

Improve the quality of life for all.

Neighborhoods, residents, businesses, landlords, and tenants.

Break the Cycle

Substandard Housing

Substandard Tenant

Neighborhood fear

Diminished quality of life for everyone

Work has Begun

Workshop of October 2013: Community Problems

Collaborative solutions”

Multi department staff discussed problem properties;

**Magic of communication – found they had lots of common ground – different problems
with the same properties;**

Get Departments out of their own silo;

Share information – communication, coordination.

Recent Efforts

Identified problem properties with public safety or code problems

Inspections by Code Officer

Administrative Review Board

Worked with owners on improvements to be made

Conditional business licenses

Used existing ordinances to support changes and improvements

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rentals.doc Page 3 of 7**

Researched solutions implemented by other communities to determine feasibility for Old Orchard Beach.

Other Communities

Portland and Biddeford disorderly housing programs

Include enforcement provisions directed at the property owners;

Reduced the number of their problem properties;

Problem tenants are forced to move elsewhere and OOB may be their destination;

Weekly rents;

Low cost;

No requirement for lease;

No background checks.

Our Assets

Business Licensing

Administrative Review Board

Code

Police and Fire

Community Support Groups.

Climate Changing

Willingness to tackle the issue;

Comments of Councilor Tousignant during the May 6th Council meeting:

“You’ve seen something happen tonight that hasn’t happened ever in Old Orchard Beach. We took some harsh movement toward a couple of Business owners and for good reason. The pictures we have seen are Unacceptable. You’ve seen what might be a turning point for Code Enforcement. I believe there’s more to come.”

Next Steps

Inter-Departmental Quality of Life Task Force

Goal:

Collaboratively develop a community wide plan for transforming chronic problem Properties.

Action Steps:

Keep initiative moving forward;

Work towards solutions with property owners;

Strengthen our neighborhoods;

Invest in upgrades, enhancing Old Orchard Beach image;

Look for grants; CDBG funding;

Enlist support of neighborhood residents.

Possible Council Actions

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Town invests in neighborhood infrastructure

**Improvements such as sidewalks, drainage and sewer, lighting, trees;
Acquiring tax delinquent and/or derelict properties.
Enhancing the Property Maintenance Ordinance.
Hold landlords accountable through business licensing.
Adopt ordinance changes as needed.**

Old Orchard Beach Quality of Life

Quality is a characteristic allowing for excellence.

Quality of Life is defined as the physical, emotional, intellectual, or cultural satisfaction in a person's everyday life.

The whole Town working together works.

The Quality of Life is more important than Life itself. (Alexis Carrel)

Improved quality of life means happy residents.

The Town attracts:

**Families to relocate;
A good quality vacationer/visitor;
Good businesses;
Economic growth.**

Quality of life encompasses The Education Factor, The Spiritual Factor, The Family Factor, The Stress Factor, The Psychological Factor, The work Factor, The Health and Safety Factor.

The Town Manager finished the presentation and then there was open discussion with the audience. Some of the issues that were discussed by several citizens who came with properties that were of concern to them as blighted were the need to address these items in a timely manner. Too many they felt had been left unaddressed for too long.

Before the discussions began Councilor Pastor extended her appreciation to Chief Kelley for handling concerns addressed at the last Town Council Meeting about the type of material displayed in store windows on the main street. She appreciated the immediate attention given by the Police and the issues being addressed by the business owners who were approached.

The following individuals spoke on conditions that needed to be addressed including Lucette Chennell, Guy Fontaine, Mark Bureau, Larry Littlefield, Jerome Begart, and King Weinstein. The Chair agreed that it was time to step up to the plate and address some of these issues and also acknowledged the time constraints of our new Code Officer. It was also noted that the change in staff has made it difficult to continue addressing issues in an ongoing manner. The Code Officer is aware of the locations and is aware of the need to address and in some instances has been addressing them. King Weinstein also presented a number of photographs of properties in disarray which have been provided to the Town Code Enforcement Officer for his follow up.

Many of the issues were the same for all speakers including the need to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the public by requiring a level of maintenance of private property which will protect the livability, appearance and social and economic stability of the Town and which also will protect the public from the health and safety hazards and the

impairment of property values which results from neglect and deterioration of property. Some of the issues addressed included abandoned structures, disrepair, overgrown, diseased, dead or decayed trees and vegetation that harbor rats, vermin and other nuisances; that substantially detract from the aesthetic and property values of neighboring properties and constitute a fire or safety hazard that is dangerous to the public health, safety or welfare. The inclusion of the disgusting issuance of solid waste which includes garbage, refuse and rubbish was raised as well. It was indicated by all that there must be an enforcement responsibility which is assigned to Code and that Code should be given the support of the Council and move forward to protect the environment of the Town and the community as a whole. One of the issues that needed to be further discussed but recommended was the need for penalties for these violations and those that would make it absolutely required that people do something about the conditions they have caused. Any person causing the type of issues we have discussed this evening should be required at least to enter into a continuing maintenance agreement to abate conditions of blight and if that doesn't work then taken to court with substantial fines applied. It was obvious from the discussion that the public believes that any condition of property blight which is reasonable and believe to be imminently dangerous to life, limb, health or safety of the occupants of the property or the public must be addressed in a timely manner and not allowed to continue. Something needs to be done whether it is a form of notice of a restriction to use or even a restriction to occupy.

Jerome Begart brought up a very important issue which was somewhat overlooked in the discussion and one of the reasons for the presentation; that being winter rentals. He presented the view that it is the business owner's responsibility who wishes to rent in the winter months to provide a safe place which requires obeying code requirements and that it should be an inviting situation which means that families who rent will be safe and not taken advantage of. The cost to the town is high not only in financial responsibilities but also in the schooling of the children.

The Town Manager spoke about the Administrative Review Board's participation in the issue of business rentals and property use and acknowledged the appreciation for their service.

The following e-mail was received from a member of the Administrative Review Board:

Dear Old Orchard Beach Town Council and Town Manager, Larry Mead

Thank you for taking the time to discuss what I believe to be a significant and vexing issue in Old Orchard Beach, problem properties.

There are two types of problem properties, one blighted, dilapidated and unkempt properties. The second type is one that creates an excessive demand on the community for public safety services.

Either type of property creates and fosters a negative image of our community, reduces property values, and increases costs for everyone in the community. There are a number of problem properties that are in prominent, highly visible areas of town!

The difficulty comes in what to do about these properties! How to get the owners of these properties to realize how their properties and business practices impact the rest of the community. We need to help owners see the steps necessary to alleviate the burden they are creating for the community. Hopefully the discussion at the workshop can develop ideas and strategies to help bring these properties into compliance.

In the past, we have had significant employee turnover in the code enforcement and town manager positions. In addition, council did not always support code enforcement and police in their efforts to make sure problem properties followed existing codes and ordinances. Support and long term consistent enforcement of existing ordinances can go a long way in getting these problem properties into compliance. I hope to attend Wednesday's workshop.

Thank you for taking the time to read this message.

Marc J Bourassa

The Chair thanked all those who attended and thanked staff for their daily involvement on the issues that were discussed. He also asked the staff to understand that the Council appreciates the recommendations that are provided to the Council and although they may not always take the advice that is offered, the Council nevertheless appreciates and anticipates further input from the staff.

Respectfully Submitted,

**V. Louise Reid
Town Council Secretary**

I, V. Louise Reid, Secretary to the Town Council of Old Orchard Beach, Maine, do hereby certify that the foregoing document consisting of seven (7) pages is a copy of the original Minutes of the Town Council Workshop of June 25, 2014.

V. Louise Reid