

Robert N. Merrill, MD
96 Chestnut Street
Camden, Maine 04843

August 20, 2013

Lowrie Sargent
Vice Chair Camden Planning Board
P.O. Box 1207
Camden, ME 04843

RE: Proposal to Rezone Fox Hill property

Dear Mr. Sargent;

I am writing to you and to the Camden Planning Board in opposition to the planned conversion of the Fox Hill property on Bayview Street to a commercial enterprise and to the suggested zoning amendment that would be required to do so. I oppose the plan on principle that commercial activities should not be conducted in residential zones, despite the appeal of the location and the desirability of alcohol rehab for midcoast Maine. I feel that this opens the door to other commercialization attempts in the neighborhood, one of the last, intact, in-town residential locations. What if the proposal were for a high end B&B? What about a marina on the lower side? Where does it stop?

I feel that spot zoning should not be allowed on a case-by-case basis and that broader zoning changes will be detrimental to the neighborhood and may lower property values as well.

This discussion would not be taking place if there were not a motive to make a profit from the beautiful location and the surrounding atmosphere that Camden offers, and that I and many others, have come to love. I am sure that the property is hard to sell but that is not my concern. I envision a lot of traffic on Chestnut and Bayview Streets and there would definitely be more going in and out of the property at a very sharp curve in the road. This changes the nature of the area.

This particular stretch of road is one of the prettiest in town and is used by a large number of local residents and visitors who walk, jog, ride bikes and push baby strollers along the narrow road. Preserving the quiet residential character of this corner of Camden is important to me.

Also, the clientele will be extremely narrowly selected by the price of treatment and thus, beyond the reach of local people for the most part. Therefore, the "public good" argument is specious. While rehab counselors may contribute to the public discourse on substance abuse, it is my opinion that the "summer camp" model of rehab away from one's life and out of sight of family and friends, has a poor track record of recovery, far less than that of AA and other "real world" programs. I feel that this is a weak support for changing the zoning of the area. Furthermore, the pricing of such exclusive residential programs is usually not covered under insurance due to its questionable value for the amount paid, and is far beyond the means of most Mainers.

I would appreciate it if you would share this letter with your colleagues on the CPB.

Sincerely,
Rob Merrill, MD