

## Brenda Day

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**From:** Wilbert Libbey <56highland@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 8, 2019 11:28 AM  
**To:** bnewseditor  
**Cc:** Brenda Day  
**Subject:** Hotel Bridgton

To the Editor:

A major controversy for the Town of Bridgton the last 12 months has been the Hotel Bridgton project. I have observed the various parties at each of the public meetings. My first thought is to question the competency of Mr. McIver's engineer? Is he trying to deceive the Planning Board, or is he simply incompetent? The number of errors or oversights seem to give way to a pattern that indicates his attention to details is severely lacking for someone who uses the title of "Engineer". Now the question begs, is he being directed by Mr. McIver? If this is the case, then he lacks professional character. That might be a more serious flaw than incompetence. I have observed many presentations to the Planning Board by other engineers concerning other projects and I have never witnessed the problems that are occurring with this project.

My second thought, if this poorly designed project passes the Planning Board criteria, the Town of Bridgton, the people of this town will be stuck with the result. Buildings that are poorly designed set on a site that is inadequate to support the use. The negative impact on our traffic, shoreline quality, and water usage/discharge will effect the town forever. There is no do-over or going back when it comes to development.

Sincerely,

Wilbert E. Libbey

Perri Black letter to the editor, The Bridgton News, Jan. 17, 2019 issue

To The Editor:

In his Letter to the Editor in *The Bridgton News*, Jan. 10, 2019, Mr. Libbey rightfully questioned the professionalism of the Licensed Engineer representing the Hotel Bridgton applicant after the engineer acknowledged missing the fact that the parcel of land for the Hotel Bridgton project that was acquired from the town is in the Stream Protection District, according to the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance. This is clearly shown in yellow on the large-scale map in the town Code Enforcement Officer's office. This major blunder and the engineer's feeble excuse for the oversight (the map downloaded from the town website was too small) should have ended the Planning Board's review of this application. It should also be reported to the Maine State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers.

If it was only this one oversight, and the engineer was to provide a proper *mea culpa*, the Board of Licensure might forgive the mistake. However, a member of the public attempted to point out to the Planning Board Chairman — after the Chairman allowed the applicant to redesign, reposition, and “slightly tweak” the principle structure (hotel building) and move it out of the Stream Protection District — that there are numerous other serious, “show stopping” infractions in the application that have been blatantly overlooked by the applicant, his engineer, and team of “professionals.” The project engineer also stated that “conferring with the town Code Enforcement Officer we thought we had it [the project] properly mapped in the General Development district.” So — is the engineer suggesting that the Town Code Enforcement Officer misinformed him, or that the CEO also missed the Stream Protection District designation on the huge, high-resolution map on his office wall? Who is the incompetent party?

The applicant's engineer should be reminded: the Maine Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers Rule 02-322 Chapter 4: Code of Ethics states in Section 2: Obligation to Society, Part 1 — “In the performance of their services for clients, employers and customers, Licensees shall be cognizant that their first and foremost responsibility is to the public welfare.” Part 5 also states, “Licensees shall express a professional opinion publicly only when it is founded upon an adequate knowledge of the facts and a competent evaluation of the subject matter.”

Something is not right here...

Hopefully the Planning Board will vote to deny this application based on Shoreland Zoning oversights, rather than assign additional "homework" and give the applicant yet another chance to get it right. How many times does this team of "professionals" get to redo their “homework” before they are given a failing grade?

Perri Black

Sweden and Bridgton

### **Hotel out of size and scale**

To The Editor:

In the most recent revision to the Hotel Bridgton Proposal submitted to the Planning Board (1/17/19) the applicant attempts to demonstrate his meeting the burden of proof for Site Plan Review Ordinance (SPRO) Performance Standard 2. "Relationship to Surroundings: Proposed structures or additions to existing structures shall be harmonious with the terrain and existing buildings in the vicinity and shall; a. Be of compatible scale and size." His narrative states "the site design and traditional architecture of the proposed buildings will compliment the historic style of the buildings on Main Street, including the adjacent NHAGA building."

The applicant's recently constructed NHAGA building is on Main Street opposite Stevens Brook from the Hotel site and within the Village Center District defined in the SPRO. The proposed Hotel site is surrounded by the Highland Road, Kennard and Bacon Street residential neighborhood and is NOT in the Village Center.

The applicant claims, "Because the proposed buildings are more similarly scaled to the Main Street corridor, the project site was designed to interact with downtown Bridgton." The applicant provides a table of "Building Sizes in the Downtown" comparing footprint area and volume of Renys, the Magic Lantern and Down East Inc building, and the existing mill buildings, including a separate house bought by the applicant. The table disingenuously separates the footprint and volume of the two proposed connected Hotel buildings, perhaps hoping the Planning Board and/or public cannot add them together for comparison. Using their numbers, the total Hotel building footprint is 13,330 sq. ft. and 405,908 cu. ft. in volume, meaning the proposed Hotel footprint is only smaller than Renys and the mill building (including the separate house) and only Renys is larger by volume at 426,000 cu. ft. Why were the footprint and volume numbers for the "adjacent" NHAGA building left out of his comparisons? More strikingly, there is no mention of the footprint, square footage, or volume of any surrounding and abutting neighborhood homes!

The applicant is attempting to redefine the meaning of "Relationship to Surroundings" and "existing buildings in the vicinity" in the SPRO as the largest building he can find in the center of Town. The Hotel will be a 38,862 sq. ft. building compared to the abutting less than 2000 sq. ft. homes and will include an enormous 82 car parking area with 26 spaces surrounding the home at 4 Kennard Street.

Let's be honest and fair to the neighboring residents of Bridgton. For this, and many other failings, the Planning Board must deny this proposal.

Doug Oakley  
Bridgton

### **A lot at stake**

To The Editor:

The proposed Hotel Bridgton project has been in the news for a long time and I'm sure all parties involved want to see it resolved. However, a lot is at stake and so many aspects of this project remain unanswered by the applicant.

Early in the process, the Planning Board asked the applicant to provide a scale model of the project to illustrate how it fits in with the surrounding buildings and neighborhood. This has not yet been provided for the public to view.

After the site walk, the Planning Board also requested a traffic study with cameras to be completed during the summer when traffic is heaviest. The traffic study provided by the applicant was done in April, the least busy time of year, and it did not include traffic generated by the conference center. Data resulting from such studies would probably show that this proposed project is not suitable for the Saunders Mill site.

Several citizens suggested that the Board request proof that the proposed hotel would not decrease the value of the abutting properties, as required by Article VII: Section A of the Site Plan Review Ordinance. It is disappointing that the Planning Board has not requested this data. It implies the Board members are not concerned about protecting the value of abutting residential properties — family homes for which the resident(s) pay taxes to the town. Whether an individual or family pays \$75,000 or \$1,000 in taxes should in no way influence the Planning Board's decision. How is the Planning Board determining the affect the proposed Hotel would have on the value of the neighborhood homes purchased before the Hotel was proposed?

The applicant has also stated that the height of the hotel would not exceed 35 feet measured from the ground — is this from the current ground level, or is he measuring from the ground after it has been raised by adding fill?

A tremendous amount is at stake here for every Bridgton resident and if the hotel project is approved, it is irreversible. The Planning Board members must ensure that each project meets every stipulation in the Site Plan Review Ordinance, and that includes protecting each resident, regardless of the size of their home or the amount they pay in taxes. I urge the Planning Board to think very carefully about their decision.

Nancy Donovan

Bridgton

**Against common sense!**

To The Editor:

After watching numerous Planning Board meetings, I cannot see how the Board, in good conscience, can approve the Hotel Bridgton project at this time. There have been so many infractions in the project proposal(s) and during the town meetings, I've lost count. This whole thing has become an extremely tumultuous topic of discussion within the community. It seems everyone is concerned about who they should and shouldn't discuss the subject with.

It should be obvious that everything previous to the upcoming Jan. 29 meeting should be nullified and have the applicant start from scratch. Only AFTER taking the appropriate amount of time to find out every minute detail in question, and having them all properly and professionally investigated, should the applicant present his final application to the town.

Decisions of the apparent magnitude of this project cannot be made on a constantly changing "proposed" plan. This allows for way too much speculation, as well as opportunity for deception and misconception of the final submission. True professionals would have known this from the very beginning. It would avoid a lot of angst and wasted time if the applicant would concede to the fact that this site is inappropriate from an economic standpoint, an "eco-nomic" standpoint, an ergonomic standpoint, and just plain common sense.

Tami Prescott

Bridgton

**No pool and a lot of noise**

To The Editor:

The plan for the proposed Hotel Bridgton project includes an indoor pool, which seems to be a positive amenity for Bridgton. However, at the last public hearing (Dec. 18, 2018) the applicant stated that Bridgton residents would have to rent a \$150 room, just like other hotel guests, if they wanted to use the pool. This raises eyebrows, given that the developer claims to have a strong affection for Bridgton and says he wants to do good things for its residents. Or perhaps whatever big box company the applicant is building for does not allow public use of their pools. Fortunately, the Colony Mast Campground in Naples allows the public to use their pool for less than \$10. Of course, the hotel guests should be able to use the public Town Beach, boat launch, and associated parking free of charge...

A concerned citizen also asked if noise generated from the proposed hotel would exceed the noise restrictions of 70 decibels allowed from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., and 55 decibels from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. During the site walk, the applicant said there would be a patio and a fire-pit in the plan. It is hard to believe that noise from nighttime outside activities or the conference center would not exceed 55 decibels — 60 decibels is normal conversation, 90 decibels is shouted conversation, and 85 decibels is a noisy restaurant or heavy traffic. This question remains unanswered.

I hope the Planning Board will take the public's concerns to heart when debating this hotel proposal and not just pass it to get it off their agenda.

Perri Black

Bridgton and Sweden

To The Bridgton Planning Board:

I attended both sessions of the Planning Board's public hearing for the Hotel Bridgton project and I would like to know why the second session wasn't stopped 10 minutes after it began when it was shown that the project encroached into the Stream Protection district (SPD) as delineated in the Shoreland Zone Ordinance (SZO).

Planning Board Chairman Steve Collins expressed concern about this particular point at the end of the Dec. 12 session and told the applicant to do some homework then come back with a revised presentation. At the beginning of the second session on Dec. 18, Mr. Collins said that this issue was a potential "showstopper" involving state regulations, for which the Planning Board could not grant waivers or variances. He stated that "if that incursion into the Stream Protection district did exist, it would be showstopper." Therefore the meeting would be stopped and so would the project application. The applicant then began his presentation, starting with the contested point and offering the ridiculous excuse that they were unaware that the project encroached into the SPD because the map they used was downloaded from the town website and was only the size of a standard piece of paper.

Several members of the public were already aware of this infraction — they simply went in to the town office and looked at the larger maps. They even had large copies of the maps printed out clearly showing the boundaries of the various zones. The applicant is not new to the area and he is not new to building projects within restricted zones. That he and the project's professional engineer did not even look at a larger map in the years they claim to have been working on this project smacks of gross incompetence and is hardly due diligence.

The proposed building placement within the restricted zone is only one of the project's infringements on the SPD regulations. Recused Planning Board member Doug Oakley attempted to point out that it also did not comply with restrictions on land fill, earth moving, and drainage (SZO Land Uses, Table 1) but Chairman Collins said they would get to it later. In fact, the Board listened to the entire project narrative based on the applicant's assertion that it met or exceeded all Standards and Ordinances, which it doesn't. The applicant also failed to include the narrative or proof of compliance with the SZO in the application, which did not allow the Planning Board or the public to review their assertions prior to reopening the hearing. Therefore, the application was incomplete.

The hearing should have been stopped as soon as it was shown that the project did not comply with the SPD regulations (minute 9:40 in the LRTV video of the meeting) and the application should have been deemed unacceptable at that point. A lawyer present at the meeting also said it was unfair to ask the public to comment on what is now a new proposal with new calculations without the opportunity to review the new plan. The applicant should resubmit an amended, complete, and final plan, including the new calculations, for reconsideration.

I feel Chairman Collins lost a lot of credibility by not stopping the hearing, especially after his comments at the beginning. The meeting went on for well over three hours and the clock ran out so the public did not get to respond and voice concerns.

Such proceedings do little to instill public confidence in the Planning Board.

Perri Black

15A Kennard St., Bridgton