

Friends of  
Hereford Inlet Lighthouse

111 n Central Ave  
North Wildwood, NJ 08260

9/20/2016

Mayor Patrick Rosenello  
Cc. Kevin Yecco, City Administrator

Patrick,

This year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lighthouse gardens, which I began developing in 1986. As you are well aware, it has become one of the premier gardens in the State, and a huge tourist attraction in the Wildwoods. It actually now draws more visitors than the Lighthouse itself and has become our best marketing tool.

Despite the incredible amount of physical and mental effort I have expended here for half of my life, I still think it was worth it. It means so much to so many people and this, along with the praise and awards, has certainly helped to keep me motivated.

The meeting at City Hall on Friday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, however was a different story. I was shocked, disappointed and extremely hurt to find out that the Lighthouse property was included in the City wide plan that Lomax Consulting drew up. Hearing this and actually finding myself on the defensive from Mr. Lomax critique of the landscaping, was like a kick in the stomach to me. Is it fair to assume Mr. Lomax has greater expertise in the field considering my successes and standing in the horticulture community?

To quote one of my board members on his reaction to the meeting, "If there was just one single perfect example of a successful project on the Island, it would have to be the Lighthouse Gardens. You would think it would be beyond reproach"

As you know there have been a whole history of controversial City decisions and resulting "battles" because of interference with the Lighthouse for political or personal reasons. This is why Bill pushed to abolish the Commission and engage the "Friends" with a management agreement and to hopefully put an end to the potential for future interference. None of these was in the best interest of the Lighthouse.

And now yet another dilemma arises.

Even at that meeting there was no secret made that the recommendations of Lomax were a way to appease our 6 or 7 neighbors. This appeasement would be at the expense of the

protection of the gardens from both the salt laden winds and from the back yard activities of neighboring homes.

When I began to write this letter, I started to list all of the problems we have had with neighbors over the years ranging from vandalism to noise to theft but I decided not to. Half of my time has been spent fighting for this place. The boards position is that these homeowners are located in a very special, unique location, next to a working Federal navigational, that is also a National historic site / museum, in addition to being surrounded by award winning botanical gardens. Where else in the State would you find that combination of things, especially near a residential neighborhood? Knowing that this situation exist near them, they should also know this requires that they have to put up with a few inconveniences. The most obvious of these is accepting the tens of thousands of visitors that come here each year and the screening of their balconies, pools and private back yard activities from those visitors. Common sense would make you think that they would share a respect and concern for the Lighthouse but this has never been shown to be the case.

All of the neighbors that abut the pine trees were told they could trim any branches that extended over their side of the fence.

The neighbors that back up to the natural undeveloped area were told that they will have a 6 foot buffer zone between the properties, cleared so that plant growth would not spread to their own property.

We feel that this is still the fairest arrangement to be considered.

Enclosed please find my rebuttals / responses to the Lomax Groups assessment and recommendations. Also enclosed is a copy of the editors column of the newsletter, ironically sent to the printer just a few days before the meeting at City Hall.

Steve Murray



Chairman

Friends of Hereford Inlet LH

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9/20/16

Peter Lomax  
Lomax Consulting group  
Cc Mayor Patrick Rosenello  
Kevin Yecco  
Doug Ford

This is a response/rebuttal to your firms assessment and recommendations regarding the Landscaping and plant materials found at the Hereford Inlet Lighthouse, contained in the report "Public Lands Vegetation Management Plan", City of North Wildwood.



4.1.2

(A) **Japanese Black Pine** (*Pinus thunbergiana*) is not considered an invasive species by either the New Jersey Dept. of Environmental Protection or the Native Plant Society of New Jersey. Nowhere in my own 40 plus years as a landscape designer and consultant have I encountered this or even a concern of this. As an avid outdoorsman I often visit the maritime forests of the Mid Atlantic States and have never seen evidence of this in these natural areas as well.

These pines are still the best "first line of defense" as a buffer plant and soil stabilizer in the seashore environment. The New Jersey Dept. of Agriculture agrees that it is more salt tolerant than any native plant and I personally think it is an incredibly beautiful tree.

It provides the tallest and densest nesting and perching areas for birds on the barrier islands and the reason there is a healthy squirrel population now, is because that mammal's main source of food is the nut of the black pine.

In regards to the danger of infestation of the Southern Pine Beetle, all pines, including our native pitch pine, are susceptible to it. This is not sufficient reason to avoid planting these trees and certainly not a reason to remove healthy, established, mature, black pines. Where this has been done on this Island and in

surrounding communities I consider it to be a tragic mistake based on irresponsible advice.

As the designer of the grounds and gardens around the Lighthouse, I insist that the pines here are indeed “complimentary” of the intended site vegetation goals. These goals were twofold. To buffer the gardens from the damaging salt laden winds on the east and screen the property from the intrusion of modern and tall buildings to the south, with their decks, pools, balconies, barbecues, noise etc. The pines, which may have escaped your notice, are under planted with a variety of woody and herbaceous native and non native plants, in addition to a short section of bamboo that you mentioned.

**Bamboo** was planted to help provide a denser screen after the owners of the adjoining property thinned out and exposed their back yard pool (5 feet away) and recreation area to the award winning gardens of the historic landmark.

**Poison Ivy** – is not planted or encouraged but is spread via bird droppings amongst the properties densely planted gardens. It is removed on a regular basis.

**(B)** “Limited screening” is not or ever has been a goal here. Maximum screening of the adjoining properties is what we attempt. A “view shed” is maintained for most of the property when viewed from Central Ave. The most important “view” is, of course, the beacon as seen from the ocean, because the Lighthouse is still first and foremost a Federal navigational aide.

**(C)** The diversity of plants on the property is unprecedented on all of the barrier islands. The gardens are among the largest public gardens in Cape May County, second only to Leamings Run Botanical Gardens in Clermont. The celebrity of the Lighthouse property is due to the incredible number of plant varieties, numbering between 150 & 200, in the most harshest seashore environment. The gardens have become a popular “proving ground” for seashore gardeners and my book “A Guide to the Hereford Lighthouse Gardens – with tips for the Seashore Gardener” has sold several thousand copies over the years. In addition, I have toured many bus loads of garden clubs, master gardeners and wild life enthusiasts, who have visited to learn more about the subject.

**(D)** Plant materials are constantly monitored for signs of disease, insect infestations and invasive plants. Several years ago one Japanese Black Pine was removed after treatment failed to kill off the Southern pine beetle. Several surrounding trees that were also infected, were sprayed, treated and recovered. Purple loose strife, wild morning glory and poison ivy are removed on discovery. Autumn Clematis vine has to be addressed and is the only present problem of that sort.

Following are rebuttals/responses to the captions and photos included in the report

**Photo 10** – It is not possible or necessary to have a complete 180 deg. view of the property from the front. This photo is taken from an angle where heavy screening is needed. The neighboring property has a patio and driveway (see the parked car) which would be fully exposed to the main Victorian style gardens in the front of the Lighthouse.

After helping to lead the \$1.5 million restoration of the historic building (under the intense scrutiny of the State Historic Commission) and after marketing the site for so many years, I am quite confident I, as well as my fellow board members, know when the view of the property is being “obstructed” in a negative way better than anyone.

#### **Photo 11**

What this photo cannot show is the fact that the homeowners of the adjoining property (out of view here) removed an ancient, perfectly healthy red mulberry tree on their side of the fence some time ago. This had served as a nice natural screen but pines and upright junipers were planted to serve as a new screen. The homeowner, despite many warnings, continued to cut away at these plants on both sides of the fence. The bamboo was planted to make a more efficient screen and more difficult to vandalize.

#### **Photo 12**

This boardwalk/viewing area that I constructed was put here for viewing the ocean, not the Lighthouse. The pines on this side (North-Northeast) however, are usually kept to a lower height. They were due to be trimmed last fall but due to a severe injury to both legs, and I was unable to do so.

The so called “proliferation” of Japanese Black Pines displacing native species here is nonsense. In the shadow of these trees are Jerusalem Artichoke (*Helianthus tuberosus*), Inberry Holly (*Ilex glabra*), Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*), Bayberry (*Myrica cerifora*), Prickly Pear (*Opuntia humifusa*), Winged Sumac (*Rhus copallinum*), Beach Plum (*Prunus maritima*), Trumpet Creeper (*Campsis radicans*), Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquifolia*) and Seaside Golden rod (*Golden rod sempervirans*).

(f) Control poison ivy and other invasive or detrimental species encroaching onto structures/trees/shrubs or into the beach trails, park paths and bike paths. Poison ivy should be controlled with the application of an approved herbicide applied by a NJDEP-licensed commercial herbicide/pesticide applicator under approved environmental conditions as outlined in this Plan. Repeat applications as necessary to ensure public safety.

#### 4.1.2 Hereford Inlet Lighthouse and Garden

(a) Evaluate the existing buffer plantings within the context of invasive species proliferation. Remove and replace on-site Japanese black pine, bamboo and poison ivy with species adapted to this coastal setting and complimentary of the intended site vegetation goals.

(b) Replacement species selection shall account for long-term site goals, including consideration for limited screening within the confines of the living fences criteria of this Plan and the need to maintain viewsheds to and from this prominent historic asset.

(c) Emphasize a diversity of vegetation on this site to demonstrate to the public which native species are adapted to coastal conditions and enhance wildlife habitats. Further, on-site landscape design and species selection should enhance the integrity of the adjacent natural areas.

(d) Monitor property for: signs of vegetation stress/die-back; emergence or spread of invasive or hazardous; and/or propagation or spread of damaging vines onto structures/trees/shrubs or into paths.

#### 4.1.3 Albert Allen Memorial Park

(a) Monitor park boundaries and planting areas for: signs of vegetation stress/die-back; emergence or spread of invasive or hazardous species; and/or propagation or spread of damaging vines onto structures/trees/shrubs or into paths.

(b) Remove invasive vegetation to the maximum extent practicable, especially Japanese black pine by cutting at the ground surface and common reedgrass by cutting where possible and selective herbicide where necessary. Special attention should be given to vegetation encroaching into the park facilities, including along the fence line on the bayside of the park. Create a maintained area up to 10 feet wide, clear of woody vegetation including vines, between the vegetation and the fence provided that the vegetation removal does not encroach upon areas regulated under the Wetlands Act of 1970 and/or the Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act.

(c) Replacement species selection shall account for long-term site goals and maximize opportunities to showcase native species by using plantings adapted to the coastal environment as replacements, lists prescribed in this Plan.



**Photo 10. Hereford Inlet Lighthouse**

View east of the Hereford Inlet Lighthouse and Gardens. Note: Views of this prominent historic feature are partially obstructed by screens of Japanese black pine.



**Photo 11. Hereford Lighthouse Gardens Buffer**

View of planted vegetation screening within Hereford Inlet Lighthouse and Gardens. Note: The use of invasive species creates unchecked proliferation of rhizome growth for bamboo and seed stock for Japanese black pine, respectively.



**Photo 12. Hereford Inlet Lighthouse and Park Obstructed Views**

View west of the Hereford Inlet Lighthouse and Gardens from the seawall. Note: Views of this prominent historic feature are obstructed by a proliferation of Japanese black pine resulting in native species displacement.