



THE OLYMPIA  
COMPANIES

May 23, 2007

Councilor Jill C. Duson  
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**VIA POSTAL & ELECTRONIC MAIL**

Re: Maine State Pier

Dear Councilor Duson,

Thank you for the time and attention that you, and your colleagues on the Community Development Committee, are investing to thoroughly review both proposals for the redevelopment of the Maine State Pier (MSP). It is with this in mind that I write to you to further explain the background and reasoning that went into The Olympia Companies' (Olympia) decision to propose a hotel on the newly widened landmass as part of our plan. I realize that as you openly stated during a CDC meeting, "you had moved beyond that hotel-on-the-pier battle." As I'm sure you know, prior to the Maine State Pier RFP announcement, I too had opposed the idea of locating a hotel on the pier and voiced these sentiments with Councilors Mavodones and Cohen. However, at the time I hadn't fully researched the merits of a hotel on the pier, especially in conjunction with a robust project that envisaged abundant public access areas, accommodation of all the myriad MSP stakeholders and abutting landowners, and solving the economic dilemma of how to pay to fix the pier. Quite thankfully, the RFP process provided me with an opportunity to more thoroughly understand the interrelation of these issues, as well as numerous others, any when everything was said and done I realized that I had erred in my previous criticisms.

As way of background, and as you probably are well aware, Olympia consulted with 12 extremely well informed community members that we believed accurately represented a disparate sampling of Portland, all of whom, as you know, are passionate advocates for the betterment of the City of Portland. We believed that a legacy proposal for Portland could only come from tapping the wisdom and aspirations from the community itself. And so began our dialogue and working relationship with these diverse representatives *from Portland for Portland*. We listened to what they said, and in the end they told us collectively and unanimously, and with full knowledge that it would be an easy excuse to disqualify our proposal, put the hotel on the proposed widened landmass beneath the pier!!!

The group started with the assumption that we couldn't locate the hotel on the pier, worked our way painstakingly through the details, and came to the ultimate conclusion that in fact we couldn't locate the hotel anywhere else. The reasons behind this conclusion are numerous. The

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hotel was the last piece of the puzzle, and placement and accommodation of all the other pieces listed below, dictated where this final piece must go. I believe that it's vitally important that you understand our path to progress. Once you do so, I have no doubt that will come to the same conclusions about our plan and the hotel.

1. Our number one reason and the cornerstone around which the rest of our plan revolves ? Casco Bay Park. A gift to the citizens for time immemorial! Everyone was unanimous that *the park was THE defining element* and that the corner of Commercial Street and Franklin Arterial is where it MUST go.

After the park, attention was naturally turned to remedying the inescapable reality that this 85 year old pier needs approximately \$15 million dollars for rehabilitation. Consequent research indicated that a hotel, office building, and to a lesser extent the on-pier tenants could yield the requisite economic drivers to pay to fix the pier while also providing a continuing revenue stream with which to maintain it for years to come. It is then with these economics and the park in mind that we designed the buildings, the revitalization of Compass Park Village, and the programming of the pier and upland area around:

2. The working waterfront: ameliorating current cruise ship, tug boat, military visitations, and emergency lay-down operations.
3. CBITD: Improved pedestrian walkways, expanded vehicular circulation and queuing, and a new freight warehouse to remedy already stressed operations.
4. Islander utility: A better environment to accommodate the needs of the islanders who view the Maine State Pier as their welcome mat and doorstep into the City of Portland.
5. Pedestrians
6. Public transportation
7. Current zoning, specifically height limitations: A building of limited height (60 feet) respects the surrounding buildings, abutting landowners, and preserves view corridors.

And, with regard to the specific placement of the building, I would like to highlight the various characteristics of a hotel that determined its ultimate placement:

1. **A hotel keeps parking and traffic off the pier.** The hotel can effectively use valet parking, as we do at our Portland Hilton Garden Inn across the street, thereby keeping all the associated parking and traffic well off site. A hotel generates much fewer trips and trips that do not conflict with the islander ferry schedule.
2. **A hotel supports pedestrian-friendly activity on the pier.** An office goes "dead" at 5 PM and on weekends. A hotel has 24/7 activity to generate and support pedestrian activity on the pier and provides an increased level of safety.
3. **A hotel offers a wider view corridor from Franklin Street.** A hotel is inherently a much narrower building than an office building. This narrower building means that we can maintain a generous view corridor down the pier, whereas an office building blocks that view.
4. **A hotel creates better operations for the CBITD.** The narrower hotel building also means that two additional traffic/queuing lanes can be added to the current CBITD configuration, greatly enhancing the ferry queuing and traffic patterns on the pier.

5. **A hotel supports better pedestrian circulation onto the pier.** In addition to improving vehicular circulation, the narrower hotel building in the Olympia project offers much more generous sidewalks on both sides of the ferry queuing – wider sidewalks on the Casco Bay Ferry side and wider sidewalks on the hotel side that are not possible with an office building.
6. **A hotel allows for more generous public access on the eastern water side of the pier.** The narrower hotel building means that the Olympia proposal can maintain a generous width along the water's eastern edge of the pier, allowing for both marine operations (a tractor trailer can go down the length), and still keep a 20 foot wide promenade open for pedestrians.
7. **A hotel building is shorter than an office building, allowing a more accommodating building scale.** An office building has a typical floor-to-floor height in excess of 13 feet to accommodate the required mechanicals, electronics, etc – a hotel typically has a floor-to-floor height of 9 feet. This means that the six-storey hotel in the Olympia proposal is only 60 feet, same as commercial street guidelines and the same as the Hilton Garden Inn across the street while the six storey office in the Ocean proposal must be in excess of 80 feet.

And, to highlight germane characteristics of the office building:

1. A 120,000 square foot office building bordering Commercial St., and situated as we have done, can have a wider base and thus can be only 4 floors to maintain a height below 60 feet and in scale with the rest of the historic buildings.
2. The office building naturally has more vehicular trips and visitors than a hotel and thus logically should be located proximate to Commercial St. rather than on the pier.
3. The office building would be within one block of the new Longfellow garage (where Olympia already has an option on 145 parking spaces) and within a 7 minute walk of 7 other garages and parking lots.

Lastly, and with specific regard to our idea to permanently fix the northern portion of the pier, resolve the perpetual skirtwall dilemma, and create a foundation for the proposed hotel by widening the current landmass, we took this idea and our plan to the U.S Army Corps of Engineers, the Maine Dept. of Environmental Protection, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Maine Dept. of Marine Resources, the Maine Dept of Conservation – Bureau of Park & Lands, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. We did so to ensure that what we were considering was a viable solution and one in which the City of Portland could have confidence. The responses from the group, all of which are included in full in our submission, were that our solution was feasible and that they saw no reason that the issue of widening the landmass couldn't be overcome when taking into account mitigation, compensation, and because of the numerous environmental benefits of our solution.

It is as a direct result of this exhaustive process that we backed into the inevitable conclusion that if we are to, among other things, develop Casco Bay Park, fix the pier, and accommodate existing stakeholders and abutting landowners, the hotel needed to be sited on our newly proposed widened land mass. As I previously mentioned, before the RFP charrette process I was 100% against a hotel on the pier! I recognize and openly admit that I was ignorant of the

facts and too quick to judge. Through extensive research and dialogue with citizens, architects, and engineers, I realized my erroneous conclusions.

In summary, I felt it incredibly important that you sufficiently understand that it is not without thought, research, and hundreds of hours of dialogue that we came to our plan. It is not something that was assembled on a whim and without regard to the various stakeholders groups, zoning, and long term planning noted above. Our plan was an extremely careful thought out process involving the citizens of Portland, abutting landowners, stakeholder businesses and government agencies which, I believe, creates the best universal solution for ALL the citizens of Portland.

I hope this information has been helpful and if I can provide anything further regarding the hotel or any other aspect of Olympia's proposal, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincere Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Mahaney", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Kevin P. Mahaney