

Dear Sir,

As Chairman of the Bellevue Ochre Point Neighborhood Association I would like to respond to the Guest View article by Donald Ross of October 12. Unfortunately there are a number of important erroneous statements that must be corrected. Mr. Ross refers to the welcome center as non-intrusive. Including landscaping it is well in excess of 4,000 square feet and placed precisely where the Vanderbilt family design team decided no buildings should ever be placed.

Mr. Ross attacks the inclusion of a restaurant in Mr. Fleming's proposal. However, Mr. Fleming only mentions one as a possibility. A four star restaurant is a fantasy of Mr. Ross, not a proposal by Mr. Fleming. Mr. Fleming's primary focus is on the ticketing and toilets function. The Preservation Society's own plans demonstrate that a ticketing building with toilets would not take up more than 1,200 square feet. This is the equivalent of about 10 parking spaces; several designs eliminated even that requirement. The Society has argued that no parking spaces can be made available. However, they propose to build a 76 seat luncheonette. The obvious implication is that 30 or more car spaces would be occupied for much longer periods of time than is currently the case. We are opposed to a restaurant being built in the Breakers parking lot. The precedent of a new stand-alone restaurant in Newport's residential neighborhood is very dangerous.

I was intrigued by Mr. Ross' reference to the caretaker's cottage as being "an important historic artifact." In the testimony of the Society's legal counsel before the HDC, this vital building and the Breakers landscape were both characterized as not being a "contributing structures" and therefore dismissed as irrelevant the HDC's considerations. This astounding demonstration of arrogance and ignorance was rightly rejected by Newport's HDC.

Mr. Ross' assertion that they first they learned of our opposition in our letter to the Daily News is entirely false. The Society was aware of our Association's serious concern that the tent might be replaced by a permanent structure prior the tent being installed. We agreed at that time not to oppose the tent, however, we never agreed to a building in its place. In October, 2012 we met with the Society and were given a tour without any specific plans. We made it clear that we would almost certainly be opposed to any building on the grounds of the Breakers. Our letter expressing our concerns to the Daily News in November, 2012 was written because we hoped the Society would open their process instead continuing to keep it secret. The statement that our concerns were not expressed directly to the Society prior to that date is nonsense.

When the Society's plan was made available in late April, 2013 we hired a world famous historic architectural firm, Heritage Landscapes, to analyze it for us. After reviewing the report, we understood the potential of the Breaker's gardens. Also, the negative impact that the welcome center would have on the Breakers estate became crystal clear. Our board voted unanimously to oppose the center.

Mr. Ross states that "repeated requests to meet with the board and/or its membership have been refused." Once again, simply not true. We did not want to have a meeting with only the Society's point

of view being available to our membership or board. In May, the Board of the Alliance for a Livable Newport requested that they be able to host a Forum in either June or July to which all interested citizens would be invited and at which both the Heritage Landscapes report and the Society's plans would be available for discussion. We accepted this proposal. The President of ALN's calls and emails to the Executive Director of the Society were never returned.

Finally, Mr. Ross states that his board "understands the critical importance of the visitor to our area's prosperity." Somehow the entire future of the Society's hundreds of thousands of annual visitors rests on building their desperately desired luncheonette. Those individuals and organizations opposed to the desecration of the grounds of our deeply loved national historic landmark, such as the staff and commissioners of the HDC and its Newport neighbors are merely ignorant luddites standing in the way of progress. It is not necessary to do irreparable damage the Breakers experience in order to somehow save it. The HDC understood that and courageously stepped up to their responsibility to preserve our heritage for future generations. It correctly interpreted the Newport Standards of historic preservation. We are confident that the Zoning Board will do the same.

James Moore