

Hello and thank you to the Town Hall for hearing comments on these critical issues.

We are the owners of multiple properties on Holden Beach and we write regarding the town's consideration of Ordinance 21-01. Specifically, we urge reconsideration of the amendment to Section 94.03(C)(2)(a)6 which allows walkways south of the landward toe of the frontal dune only for property owners with lots that have more than 300 feet from the seaward toe of the frontal dune to the last line of natural stable vegetation.

At the outset let us note that we understand and sympathize with the values underlying the current zoning. The protection of other properties from potential damage, and more importantly, the preservation of the health of the dunes are tremendously important to us as property owners in the community. However, we believe that the current ordinance, as applied, reflects a gap in the goals and application of these values. For properties such as 1117 Ocean Boulevard West, this formulation creates distinct challenges for the use of the house in a responsible way.

The house at 1117 is a newly constructed beachfront property. During the summer months it is primarily rented out to visiting families. These families rent the house, in large part, to access the beachfront. Currently the house has a short walkway that terminates with a stepdown onto the dunes. Following the existing ordinance requires guests to walk directly on the dunes and vegetation for well over 100 feet to access the beach. This, of course, creates a potential violation of other ordinances which forbid directly walking across the dunes.

This creates a fundamental tension for responsible preservation of the health of the dune. To make this concrete, the house at 1117 sleeps 19 people. On average, there will be roughly 10 people in the house every week from the middle of April to the middle of September. Those people go to the beach about twice a day during their vacation. Without a protective wooden path, this means 40 walking trips per day across the dunes, for at least 22 weeks a year. This is over 6,000 walking trips across sensitive dunes every year, for decades to come.

The amount of erosive damage to the dunes from this many unprotected trips across the dunes is real and tangible. It far exceeds the hypothetical damage from a wooden path installed into the dunes. This is likely also why every neighboring house adjacent to 1117 has a wooden walkway that extends to the furthest dune. We believe it is both economically and ecologically fair and reasonable to allow 1117 Ocean Boulevard West and other houses in the immediate area to build protective walkways over the dunes to allow people to walk to the beach without causing harm.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this issue.

Very sincerely yours,

The Showalter Family