Bald Head Association
111 Lighthouse Wynd • PO Box 3030 • Bald Head Island, NC 28461
910-457-4676 • www.BaldHeadAssociation.com

April 9, 2021

Village of Bald Head Island
PO Box 3009
Bald Head Island, NC 28461

Dear Village Council Members,

The past year brought an unprecedented number of new homeowners to Bald Head, and as the record real estate sales and new home construction progresses there has been a disturbing trend. Over the decades, Bald Head Island has distinguished itself from its neighbors by the natural look of the island that has been maintained. This was not accidental; the covenants and guidelines of Bald Head Association and its sister HOAs, developed over many years, require that the majority of original tree and understory growth be retained, and there are limits placed on what can be done by homeowners with regard to clearing of their property. Clear-cutting of lots is prohibited. These guidelines were carefully crafted with an eye to retaining the uniqueness of Bald Head, and by doing so, to enhance owners' home values. It should be noted that retention of understory and trees is a key factor in providing habitat for birds and other animals that are an important part of the beauty and attraction of BHI. However, several recent changes to the Island have resulted in increased clearing of land. In addition, a systematic impediment to the prevention of such clearing has become obvious.

The record home sales have brought many new homeowners and residents to BHI who are not familiar with the longstanding prohibitions on clearing of understory. Many of these owners come from suburban neighborhoods where a lawn devoid of natural shrubs or understory is the norm, so eliminating understory vegetation seems the normal thing to do.

A second, equally important change is the arrival of landscapers on the island whose default approach to "cleaning up" a lot is to weed whack all understory down to sand. In fact, the prevalence of this approach is such that it is beyond the resources of BHA staff to keep up with the violations thus incurred. Also, as a homeowners' association, BHA has little or no legal recourse with landscapers. And, BHA's experience is that often the homeowner had no idea the landscaper was going to clear as much foliage as they did.

The systematic problem is that while BHA can fine homeowners for cutting trees or trimming/clearing understory, by the time such action is taken, the damage is done, and practically speaking the natural landscape does not get restored, even if remediation is required by BHA. In this instance, the remedies offered by NC statutes and BHA covenants/guidelines

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simply are not effective in their stated purpose: maintaining the natural beauty and hence the value of Bald Head Island and the home values of its residents and homeowners.

The systematic problem described above means that the cure is almost worse than the disease; the homeowner gets a fine, the landscaper suffers no penalty and Bald Head properties become less green and natural in appearance.

The Village, unlike BHA, has the ability to control the activities of landscapers, businesses and homeowners via ordinances. An ordinance synchronized with BHA guidelines would be a powerful tool in keeping Bald Head the beautiful place we all want it to be. We respectfully request that the Village Staff collaborate with BHA Staff to draft such an ordinance, and that the Council approve it.

Such a collaborative effort to synchronize the BHA guidelines and Village ordinances with regard to cutting of vegetation, applicable to property owned by homeowners, BHA, the Village or businesses will be good for our community in terms of property value and quality of life. We hope the Council will choose to partner with BHA in this effort.

Respectfully,

Alan Briggs, President

A. John Kinney, Vice President

Robert Drumheller, Secretary/Treasurer

Tiffany Williams

Jennifer Lucas

John L. Fisher

cc: Chris McCall, Village Manager