

# An Open Letter to the Community

- from Peter Ralston

## To Whom it May Concern,

We write in support of the new hotel in Rockport's harbor village. It is very clear that the overwhelming majority of Rockport residents are in support of the Rockport Harbor Hotel, despite the very expensive clamor created by the "Friends of Rockport."

It is our hope that the "Friends" obsession with blocking this new business causes no further acrimony in our town and not cost our town's taxpayers more than the \$130,000 already incurred in legal fees or the estimated additional \$100,000 the town may incur if the "Friends" legal manoeuvres continue.

Let's take a closer look at the much-vilified Smith family. Among other things, the "Friends" website calls them out of town oligarchs. They have been doing business here (Rockport, Camden and Rockland) since 1975. Since then, they have employed over 3000 people. Their businesses currently employ 120 people and the start-to-finish total of people employed in the construction of the hotel will be approximately 110. The Smith family-owned businesses put a lot of money into the local economy.

Their business acquisitions have kept three major commercial properties in the hands of caring locals as opposed to these properties slipping onto the ledgers of non-local commercial developers with little if any community-based interest; the old Hoboken Gardens site (was being considered by Family Dollar Store), the old Sears Building in Rockland and the old Van Baalen factory in Rockland, now home to a University of Maine branch and the Breakwater Marketplace.

Speaking of local interest.... here are only a few of the many things that the Smith family has been involved with over the past four decades, and by involved we don't mean just writing checks, we mean rolled-up sleeves and deep commitment in partnership with many others of like-minded, positive community spirit:

- leadership roles with the Camden-Rockport School Board and the creation/building of the new high school, leadership role with the old and new YMCA, Youth Arts Program, leadership role in creating the Midcoast Recreation Center, leadership role at the Children's House Montessori School, board of the Camden-Rockport Historical Society, the Camden-Rockport Middle School building vision committee, leadership role with PAWS Animal Adoption Center, board of the Camden Public Library....etc. etc. etc. This partial list doesn't include the charitable donations the family and their businesses make each year.

Now let's look at the efforts of the "Friends:"

- the "Friends" formed with the avowed sole cause of fighting the hotel. There is no apparent record of other accomplishments on their part.
- as regards the "Friend's" rallying cry of "it's ugly," the Smiths have gone to great lengths to appropriately match the architectural details of the adjacent buildings. We invite any and everyone to come have a look at what they have actually built so far.
- "Friends" legal counsel has repeatedly raised questions of conflict of interest on the part of town officials and Board/Committee members, then subsequently withdrawn these inaccurate insinuations.
- due to the "Friends" unrelenting legal pursuit, work has been delayed on the hotel and the downtown can now expect construction to carry over into the 2022 summer season.
- the "Friends" have asked the court to order the hotel torn down. We believe that this reveals a deeper motivation than simply addressing parking and aesthetic issues at the expense of every taxpayer in Rockport.

The Smith family are good people and good neighbors here in Knox County. We welcome them into downtown Rockport and we welcome their latest effort to restore vitality in a village that for decades has seen the failure of one business after another. Yes, Rockport is finally going to have to confront the parking problems that were officially recognized over thirty years ago. Yes, there will be additional lights and sound in the downtown area....as well as significantly enhanced tax revenues. To us that smells like success for Rockport's harbor village...and beyond.

Every single one of us would rally to the "defense" of Rockport were we to see inappropriate development coming to this site. That is simply not the present case and we are glad that the Smith family acquired this property and are going to help steer the harbor village in a meaningful and lastingly positive direction.

For those who now declare that they will never countenance this hotel, we'd like to remind them of the old Maine observation that "here, never is about seven years."

## Signers as of 1/24/22:

Lance and Liz Ahearn  
Manaana Alexander  
Taylor Allen and Martha White  
Tom and Mary Amory  
Erick and Gretel Anderson  
Sam and Annie Appleton  
Chelsea Armstrong  
Rick and Sue Ash  
Therese Bagnardi  
Heidi and Jake Baker  
Andrea Barbour  
Rick Bates and Robin McIntosh  
Corey Belcher  
Gail and John Bertuzzi  
Nicole and Neal Blake  
Keith Blizzard  
Kip Boetsch  
Carmen and Thierry Bombeke  
Kaleb Booth  
Aby Booth  
Rosemary and Jayson Booth  
Norm Bouchard  
Ann and Rick Bresnahan  
Barrett and Lynne Brown  
Jane Buffett  
Lynn Bushee  
Louise and Richard Cadwgan  
Kathy and Brian Cassidy  
Rutledge Chalk II  
Jeff and Wendy Charland  
George and Elizabeth Collins  
Stacey and Jonas Contakos  
Doug and Pat Cole  
Maureen Cole  
Joel Cooke  
Mazie Cox and Brink Thorne  
Sandy Cox  
John Curry  
Troy and Jen Curtis  
Pamela Dalfonso  
William H. Davies  
John and Barbara Davidson

Chip Dewing  
Tricia Dixon  
Erin Donovan  
Karen Doran  
Jessica and Patrick Duffy  
Michael Dufour  
Nathan Dunton  
Amanda and Rob Dwelley  
Sarah Dwelley  
Lauren and Justin Edelstein  
Ben Ellison  
Doug Erickson  
Stuart Farnham, Jr.  
Leslie and Bob Fillnow  
Brian and Caitlin Fitzpatrick  
Gef and Larissa Flimlin  
Valarie Foster  
Lisa and Gary Fowlie  
Allison Fox-Glover  
Carole Gartley  
Chris and Janice Gates  
Bill and Jill Glover  
Raymond Goergen  
Lee and Jon Goss  
Brandon Graffam  
Connor Graffam  
Ella Graffam  
Jan Graffam  
Martina Graffam  
Ryan Graffam  
Ted Graffam  
Ruth and Steve Graham  
Bruce Haffner  
Debra Hall  
Jeff Hamilton  
Steve and Amy Hand  
Maurice and Valerie Harmon  
Lynn Harrington  
Mark and Andrea Harris  
Cig Harvey  
Evelina and Matthew Haskell  
Jason Haynes and Raymond Ringer  
Pam Holland  
Debby Hornyak

Scott and Robin Horty  
Michael D. Hurley  
Sara Jenkins  
Curtis and Eliza Jensen  
R. Douglas Kahn  
Stephen R. Kahn  
Samuel Ladley  
Dale and Alyssa Landrith  
Jack Lane  
Sarah and Matt Lapides  
Tom Laurita  
Nancy and Bob Lawson  
Debra and Doug Lay  
Nancy and Dwight Leeper  
Larry Lehmann  
Bill and Gretchen Leone  
Linda and Grif Leshner  
Cheryl and Matthew Levin  
Nikki Lindsey  
Drew and Mackenzie Lyman  
William and Mary Maddox  
Rick and Deborah Manning  
Jamie and Peter Masin-Peters  
Jennifer Matthews  
Carolyn and Keith May  
Jim Mays  
Stefanie McAllister  
Alison McKellar  
Marilyn McWilliams  
Allen and Marge Mitchell  
Maureen Montgomery  
Mary Moran  
Mary Morgan  
Chris and Delisa Morong  
William Morong  
Janet Murdock  
Tom Murphy  
Elizabeth Noble  
Gayle and David Noble  
Karen Nolan  
Deniz Ovecoglu  
Mary Stevens Ovecoglu  
Colin Page  
January Peavey

Connie and Etienne Perret  
Peter and Jamie Masin-Peters  
Larkin and Sarah Post  
Jonathan Potter  
Joe and Tina Pyne  
Peter Ralston and Terri Harper  
Richard Remsen  
Casey and Ellen Reynolds  
Chrisso Rheault  
Jeffrey Runge and Lynn Rutter  
Connie and Juliet Russell  
Nathan and Jody Russell  
Kamala Sachidanandan  
Rob Sebold  
Clementine Senatone  
Elizabeth Senders  
Sarah and Mario Serafini  
Beverly and Dennis Shaugnessy  
Dick and Sandy Shaw  
Helen A. Shaw  
Ken Shure and Liv Rockefeller  
Frank and Libby Simon  
Curt and Fran Slater  
Seamus Smith  
Maurice and Robin Spear  
Doug Stradley  
Becca Swan  
Benjamin Todd  
Nathan Tolman  
Mark and Louisa Van Baalen  
Elizabeth and Peter Vickerman  
Tracy and Randall Wakeford  
Doc and Haunani Wallace  
Jamie and Maria Weymouth  
Nina Lynn Wheeler  
Tracy Wheeler  
George Wheelwright  
Steven F. Wickham  
Addison Whitworth  
Jacob Wienges  
Adda Winkes and Tim Kunkel  
Kristen and Eric Winters  
Thomas Wytiaz  
James Wytiaz

**LIVE STREAM THE ROCKPORT PLANNING BOARD MEETING  
THURSDAY, JANUARY 27<sup>th</sup> AT 5:30PM**

**<https://livestream.com/rockportmaine/events/10061091>**