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Department of Planning & Community Development
280 Madison Avenue N. Bainbridge Island, WA 98110

To Whom it may concern:

I am writing you concerning the Olsen RUE/PLN51183 RUE in Fort Ward. As you are fully aware, this lot is fully encumbered by wetlands and buffers. The owner was also fully aware of this fact when he purchased this lot. When Fort Ward Estates was platted in 1960, the lot lines were drawn without regard to wetlands, streams, or other natural features. This was not a problem in Fort Ward until the 1990s when the upgrade of the sewer system allowed previously undevelopable land to be developed. Around the same time, the newly incorporated City of Bainbridge Island established building ordinances that allowed development in wetlands, under certain circumstances. Fortunately for the health of the wetland, John Neimeyer of Mainlander Properties donated several wetland lots to the city to protect and preserve the wetlands in Fort Ward. Unfortunately, many other wetland lots are still held in private ownership.

Lot TA# 41480030100007 is one of the last undeveloped lots in private ownership that is part of the wetland running from Parkview Dr. north to Blakely Harbor. Much of this wetland northwest of Robertson flows uninterrupted by development since Mainlander Properties donated those lots to the city in the 90s. Before development, a lake covered most of Mr. Olsen's lot and the lot on the south side of Belfair, connected to Mr. Olsen's lot by a culvert (see pictures 1, 2, and 3 below). There is talk of an attempt to restore some of this wetland by replacing the culvert that runs beneath the Belfair trail. Once the culvert is replaced, even more water will flow across Olsen's lot than it does now. On top of that, adding a paved driveway, adjacent to the footpath, to access this lot will increase run-off and thus increase the water in the wetland even more. Unfortunately for property owners, wetlands do not respect property boundaries.

Another problem is the unsafe condition of the intersection at Belfair and Soundview. Soundview Drive is misaligned at this intersection (see Google Earth image, picture 4). North of Belfair, the pavement is in the middle of the road. To the south, the roadway is at least fifteen feet to the west of the middle, so there is a jog at the intersection. Turning north (left) from Belfair onto Soundview (see Google Earth image, picture 5) can be confusing and dangerous. It is essentially a blind corner due to the fence around the property on the north west corner. You can't see any oncoming cars. Also, while the road appears to be a t-intersection, the misalignment can cause drivers turning north to turn into left side of Soundview into oncoming traffic. There are often cars parked in the right-of-way here, which cannot be seen from Belfair due to the fence. Adding to the problem is the pathway along Belfair which crosses the wetland and intersects Soundview here. This trail is the major pedestrian connection between the upper Fort Ward neighborhood and Fort Ward Hill Road, and to bus stops the park. It is well traveled by walkers, bicyclists, commuters, and dog-walkers, but most notably by many, many children, often accompanied by parents and younger siblings headed to and from the school bus stop. Adding a driveway off of Soundview, right next to trail and off center from the intersection will only add to the confusion.

Please carefully consider the impact on the wetland, as well as the safety of the intersection, when reviewing this application. I would be happy to answer any questions you have about my concerns. If it would be helpful, I would also be happy to show you what my concerns are at the site itself.

Respectfully,

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Picture #1



Picture #2



Picture #3 - Belfair before it was closed to traffic.



Picture #4



Picture #5

