

Dear Friends and Neighbors, Concerned Citizens of Bar Harbor,
We have arrived at a critical watershed in our town's history.
We have to decide when we vote June 13 whether Walsh Family enterprises (Ocean Properties) owns our town or it belongs to we the people.

Shamelessly, Ocean Properties has cynically and egregiously ignored and dismissed our votes, representing a clear majority, to seriously cap the number of passengers and cruise ships. Threatening us with law suits (selling tickets years in advance) and higher property taxes, they have tried to bully and frighten us and have insinuated themselves financially into our town's institutions, organizations, and businesses.

Counting on their fathoms deep pockets, into which some of us have unfortunately fallen, they are impervious to all the well-documented evidence that huge cruise ships with as many as 5,000 and even 6,000 passengers (Carnival Cruise Lines is now boasting that its Symphony of the Seas can accommodate 7000 passengers on its 16 decks) constitute a menace to our environment and fragile ecosystem. They emit noxious fumes, pollute our ocean, endanger marine life, and contribute to acid rain and climate change. The thousands of passengers, who disembark from these floating cities, crowd our sidewalks, compromise our air quality with the fumes of idling busses, clog our roads, strain our municipal services, and discourage our land-based tourist industry, so that Bar Harbor has become notorious as a "zoo" during tourist season, confirming its reputation for selling its soul and as Yogi Berra, of baseball

fame, quipped, a place “so crowded no one goes there anymore.”

In 2019 the giant Carnival and its subsidiary Princess Cruise Lines paid a 20 million dollar fine for dumping plastic waste into the ocean after paying a previous fine of 40 million for deliberate acts of pollution, e.g. dumping vast quantities of oil, plastics and garbage into the sea.. Worth billions, these fines are less than a slap on the wrist for a corporation that is solely responsible to their employees and shareholders and don't give a damn about the environment, polluting on a scale of 3-4 times that of air travel. A luxury cruise ship releases ten times more carbon than all of Europe's cars. A 3000 capacity cruise ship generates 150,000 gallons of sewage and gray water, enough to fill 12 swimming pools, in addition to other hazardous wastes. Each cruise ship passenger's carbon footprint is tripled on one of these floating cities, most of which burn HFO fuel oil, the dirtiest fuel available.

All this information, and much more, is readily available on the internet, but these statistics don't seem to matter because money has the last word. In retrospect, allowing for a citizen's initiative was a cynical gesture of good faith. Maybe our town council did not expect a clear majority to express a preference for less passengers and less cruise ships or that we would vote to pass an ordinance limiting the number of passengers to no more than 1000per day, thus seriously limiting cruise ship traffic.

For two years we were spared the presence of this menace that over the years had grown from one ship, to two ships to as many as three ships in our harbor on just one day. Sadly, it took a pandemic to rid us of them when it was obvious, even to CLIA (the Cruise Lines Industry Association) that they had become floating petri dishes. The Association to Preserve and Protect Local Livelihoods, a consortium of local businesses claim they are financially dependent on the revenue provided by the cruise ships, but some serious fact checking is in order; 2020 and 2021 when there were no cruise ships were banner years commercially for Bar Harbor, due to our land-based tourists who visited us in droves, delighted to experience Bar Harbor as it was.

Throughout at least the last ten years, the deleterious effects of cruise ships on the environment have become more and more obvious and well-documented. It is now known that the plastics from cruise ship garbage have found their way, via the food chain, into mother's milk. Here on Mount Desert Island not that many years ago we could expect one really hot week in August and the rest of the summer was pleasantly warm; the beautiful stone bench on the sand in Southwest Harbor is now under water, and the water at Sand Beach which was bone-chilling doesn't feel as cold, and no wonder because the Gulf of Maine is warming faster than any other body of water on the planet.

On March 2, Judge Lance Walker spoke of Bar Harbor's "boosterism for the cruise ship industry" and delivered a

scathing rebuke of the town' leadership as having a history of being a tool of the cruise industry against the people of Bar Harbor, denouncing Bar Harbor as having "...veered from the normal ethos of a democratic community," writing that "Indeed there is a strong showing that the Town has given over to the Walsh family enterprises carte blanche regarding the cruise ship industry.

Citing obvious conflicts of interest, Judge Walker named Eben Salvatore who operates the tender business for Ocean Properties who recently resigned as head of the Cruise Ship Committee only to become a member of the Warrant Committee, where he successfully convinced the members to oppose the citizen's position on the ballot. Our last three town managers, Ashe, Knight, and Sutherland, were advertised and vetted by the Bangor legal firm of Eaton Peabody, who represent none other than Ocean Properties. And so the plot sickens...

As a parting salvo, before he resigned, Kevin Sutherland authorized 36 additional cruise ships to be added to the 2024 schedule only one day before the voters overwhelmingly approved a 1000 a day visitor cap. Sutherland left with a generous package that included a six months severance pay after working only 13 months, and all this with the compliance of a majority of the council members.

It is not and has never been the case that we the people want zero cruise ships, only smaller ones and less of them. Sadly for the cruise lines, but far better for us, downsizing from

thousands of passengers to fewer passengers and smaller ships, effectively reducing cruise ship traffic by 90%, would require retiring these huge monoliths, transforming their entire industry and rendering it drastically less lucrative. As it is now, the tickets are deceptively cheap because it is understood that once the passengers are onboard they will be spending lots more on all the add-ons including drinks, etc.

Actually, every penny of the million dollars we earn from the cruise ships must be allocated for improvements that benefit the passengers, e.g. fancy signage, plantings, decorative granite stonework, etc. and other amenities to beautify Bar Harbor 's façade lest we appear shabby to the cruise ship passengers. Actually, though, Bar harbor earns more than twice that amount each season on the parking meters thanks to our land-based tourists. We can use these funds at our discretion to improve our medical, educational and other services

It is indisputable that as the caretakers of our Eden, we are responsible for acting morally and ethically, not only for our future generations, but for all the species of marine life whose habitat has become increasingly polluted and life-threatening. (Cruise ships have altered the marine soundscape to the extent that harsh noises have forced marine mammals, high up on the list of sentient beings, to flee their natural habitat and feeding grounds. For whales and dolphins, who are unable to communicate, hearing injuries are fatal.

In July 2001 the carcass of a hunchback whale (the same species that approach the whale watch boat owned by Ocean Properties) known as “Snow” was found floating in Alaska’s Glacier Bay. Named for the white markings on her flukes, she died due to a massive blow to her skull and cervical vertebrae as a result of a collision with a cruise ship. Princess Cruise Lines pleaded guilty to failing to operate its vessel at a slow and safe speed near hunchback whale violating the Marine Protection Act and the Endangered Species act. In 2019 two hunchback whales, one a pregnant female, were found dead in Glacier Bay, whose deaths were also attributed to collisions with cruise ships.

We can be proud of COA, the first college in the US to focus on the relationship between humans and the environment. Through Allied Whale, one of their projects, COA has developed an innovative system of whale identification and houses the largest collection of photo-identified humpback and finback whales in the world. And from their mission statement, students graduate with a human ecological perspective, gaining an appreciation for all forms of life... and so it would seem that COA would be in the forefront of the fight against the cruise ships.

And yet, when I questioned several students about the absence of COA’s voice, I was told that the students were advised “not to get involved in town issues.” In this same regard, given the effects of cruise ships on climate change and acid rain, ACTT

(our local A Climate To Thrive) has also been conspicuously absent from the discussion.

What we need is a Greta Thurnberg, the Swedish teenage environmental activist who in 2021 addressed the UN advocating for drastic measures to deal with Climate change. This battle against the cruise ships would have been settled long ago if some (or even one) students from COA or the high school had presented facts about the cruise ships at the same Town council meeting where representatives of CLIA (Cruise Lines Industry Association) disingenuously assured our Town Council that they were willing to work with the Bar Harbor citizens to help us avoid law suits. Even though these representatives of the industry were personable, and very self-assured, and even though our council members nodded gratefully and approvingly, they would have been vanquished by even a single student standing up with pages citing the statistics about the effects of the cruise ships.

The other towns with whom we share Mount Desert Island can be proud for voting against having the cruise ships in their backyards. Those who pride themselves, and rightly so, for being on “The Quiet Side” assume this is all just business as usual for Bar Harbor, known for selling its soul in Faustian bargains for ice cream cones and tee shirts and dubbed a “zoo” during the tourist season where, as Yogi Berra, legendary Yankee baseball catcher quipped, it’s so crowded no one wants to go there anymore.

The reality, however, is that all of us on Mt. Desert Island share the same backyard and all the noxious effects of our cruise ships are polluting their water, so it is their best interest to assist our efforts. Given the fact that even a seven year old knows that a bottle with a note will sooner rather than later wash up on a far distant shore. What is true in the human sphere about six degrees of separation is just as true in other spheres. True to the butterfly effect, a pebble skimming the water in Bar Harbor is rippling the water in Northeast and Southwest.

Perhaps, and hopefully, many port cities, some of which like Venice are pushing back, will realize their strength is in numbers and will join together to fight the cruise ships. Meanwhile, in Key West, the other cruise ship destination where Ocean Properties is firmly entrenched, the Walsh family overturned the cruise ship referendum, passed by 60% of the voters to seriously curtail cruise ship traffic, thanks to a \$995,000 contribution (augmented by a contribution from the cruise ship industry) to Ron DeSantis' gubernatorial campaign. We can be sure they'll be tuned into our election June 13 with which they share such a common cause.

The Walsh Family has a history of duplicity with the construction of the Harborside on Eden Street Vigorously maintaining to the then Town Council tht it was not a Holiday it was not long before a small "Holiday Inn" sign appeared on the side of the road. Through the years , it is common knowledge that all their building projects violated existing codes, but that

but was ok because they paid the fines and that was the end of it. The rest of us did and do not receive preferential treatment and seem to understand this is not ethical behavior so we either scrap or modify our building plans so we are in conformity with the law.

It should sadden us that those who recognized the wonder that is Acadia National Park and who worked tirelessly to preserve it for us and future generations are not mentioned in this contentious discourse and shameful political maneuvering. Foremost among those is George B. Dorr, recognized as the Father of Acadia National Park and who devoted his life and entire personal fortune to preserving the Park. He first visited the area as a 15 year old and, like many of us, was smitten by this miracle of Nature. It is beyond “chutzpah” that among the amenities listed on the Harborside web site is the hotel’s proximity to the George B, Dorr Museum of Natural History. What an object lesson in insult upon injury! Ocean Properties and those who are complicit with them have dishonored his memory.

In 1962 “ Silent Spring” by Rachel Carson was incredibly instrumental in raising our consciousness and conscience regarding the dangers of pesticides. Today we have numerous books like “The Plastic Ocean” about the destruction of our marine environment and “The Silent Earth: Averting the Insect Apocalypse” to alert us to the Third World War which is being waged by man against nature that is now in progress.

Here in our town of Bar Harbor in this historic election we have the power with our votes to do our part to reverse this destructive course. Ocean Properties, Eaton Peabody, the Town Council, APPLL, the Chamber of Commerce, the town lawyer, et are all against us fighting for their purely commercial interests, but we the people have the power given to us in our foundational document. From the top of Cadillac these huge ships look like miniature toys which they are compared to the power we can exert on June 13 when we vote for Charles Sidman and the slate he endorses: Nate Young, Kyle Shank, and Maya Caines.