

Over 2 years ago, we entered into a contract to purchase the south end of Topsail Island, known as “The Point.” We had seen the property on the market for years and had heard rumblings of developers’ plans. And like so many other Topsail residents, we’d frequently visited The Point and wanted to see its natural beauty preserved. It became our passion to find a way to preserve the serenity of the land while carving out a small portion for our growing family to enjoy as stewards.

We were well aware of the sensitivity of this area. To show our commitment to developing this property with minimal environmental impact, our first step was to proactively establish conditional zoning in Topsail Beach, a concept present in surrounding jurisdictions such as Pender County and North Topsail Beach. We wanted to ensure that the Town could establish guardrails on The Point’s development and the development of other properties in the Town.

Since then, we’ve worked diligently through the conditional rezoning process, starting with a public input meeting, followed by presentations to the Planning Board, and most recently, with the Town's Board of Commissioners. We signed a Letter of Intent with the NC Coastal Land Trust to establish a conservation easement on at least 80% of the land. We took feedback from both residents and Town officials and updated our plans and drawings to reduce the impact on the land to less than 4% impervious surfaces. We have listened, iterated, and stayed patient through a very tedious and lengthy process that unfortunately still remains far from complete two years later.

As a result, we have decided to withdraw our application for conditional rezoning, and sadly, to suspend our plans for The Point. We are extremely disappointed to get to this point after two years, but we do not believe that a successful outcome is possible based on the current process.

There are two main reasons we have reached this point and ultimately withdrew the rezoning application. First is the lack of collaboration throughout the process notwithstanding the nature and intent of the conditional zoning process. Despite our repeated requests for time to discuss the details of our rezoning request and come up with solutions together, the Commissioners refused to meet with us one-on-one and routinely passed us off to the Town's staff and external planning consultant. Meanwhile, we understand the Commissioners directly conversed with members of the community who opposed our plans. This one-sided behavior has led to confusion and an unending set of proposed conditions.

Second were the mixed messages we received from the Commissioners, who asked for both fast decisions to very complicated requests while also regularly reminding us of the generational nature of those decisions. For example, suggesting a two-week deadline to determine the 50-year impact of our plan on the surrounding wetlands was unrealistic. While the intent of conditional zoning is to provide guardrails for development, we often felt pulled between making these decisions quickly and alone or ceding full control to a group of elected officials. Neither of these options is good for the Town.

Ultimately, there are three possible scenarios for this coveted property: a permanent conservancy by the community or Town, a larger scale development by a professional development group, or a low impact private development like the one we've proposed. We still strongly believe that our proposal is the best option for The Point. This property has spent the better part of 18 years for sale - plenty of time for the Town or community to develop a conservation plan. That hasn't happened. It seems increasingly likely that a developer with deeper pockets and more experience will successfully develop this land, and in doing so, permanently alter the state of The Point.

We want to thank our team for their efforts. We also want to sincerely thank the members of the community who spoke on our behalf – their support kept us pushing forward through this process.

Our lives are full. We have four children at home and two young adults. Todd is very busy leading a company through an unprecedented macroeconomic climate. This process wasn't additive to our lives, like we hoped it would be – it was dilutive. We invested the time, money, and energy to find a solution to protecting an area of the world we love. But solving problems requires collaboration, which the Town appears to have been unwilling to do. We have no choice but to withdraw our application.

We hope the best for the Point.