

Neighbors win battle to ban events at Wings Neck Lighthouse

State Appeals Court orders owner to refrain from booking weddings, large gatherings in residential area

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POCASSET — After years of battling against major events being held at the Wings Neck Lighthouse, neighbors learned that they would finally get relief for summers to come.

The state Appeals Court on Friday upheld a lower court ruling ordering owner Christina Stevens to refrain from holding weddings, receptions or similar events at the lighthouse.

"We've been fighting for too long," Wings Neck resident Paula Meridan said. "This is great news."

Neighbors have been dealing with issues at the lighthouse for

years, she said.

"Honestly, it doesn't just affect us on the point. The ruling will affect other people in town," Meridan said. It will give the town a reason to block such large events from residential neighborhoods, she said.

"It's a win for everybody in the town of Bourne," Meridan said.

After complaints by neighbors over traffic and noise, the town building inspector issued a cease-and-desist order to Stevens in January 2013.

The case was brought before state Land Court and was settled in June 2016 after an agreement with the Board of Selectmen that allowed Stevens to host four events a year.

James Molloy, president of the Wings Neck homeowners association, appealed the Land Court

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Stevens then appealed the Zoning Board's decision in Barnstable Superior Court in October 2016. The Zoning Board's decision was upheld after a bench trial in November of that year.

A month later, Stevens filed a notice with the state Appeals Court. She was allowed to hold events at the lighthouse while that appeal was ongoing.

In its Friday ruling, the Appeals Court said selectmen were without authority to adjust or determine the proper enforcement of the bylaw regarding the lighthouse property.

The use of the property for weddings is contracted with unrelated third parties for financial gain by the owners, according to the court ruling. "We discern no reason to invalidate the board's decision

for residential use. There is no zoning for commercial purposes that would support weddings or comparable functions.

The court decision gives seasonal and full-time residents what they want — "Tranquility, peace and quiet and not have a commercial event in your neighborhood ever weekend," Meridan said.

A Barnstable Superior Court judge, however, issued an injunction in June 2019 to bar Stevens from holding events at her residential property at 0 and 1 Lighthouse Lane until the final judgment was entered in her appeal of the Zoning Board decision.

Neither the lighthouse trustee, Stevens or any beneficiary of the trust lives on the property, the ruling also noted.

Stevens rents the property as advertised for a minimum seven-day stay. During peak summer months, the property is rented for \$5,999 a week, according to the rental's website.

The noise and extra traffic from the events have riled the neighbors, many of whom have owned property on the small peninsula for generations.

As president of the homeowners association, Molloy represents all owners on the street who have contributed to the legal fund to stop major events at the lighthouse.



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