

A lesson in civics

Southampton officers knew of possible high-rise in '05

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It appears residents harkening back to 1968 and the days of protest might want to take a closer look at another year — 2005.

At least two years before the placards and the emergency meetings, ranking members of the Southampton Civic Club discussed the likelihood that a high-

rise was coming to the corner of Ashby and Bissonnet streets.

The Examiner has obtained e-mails to members of the Civic Club legal committee — dating back as far as Sept. 7, 2005 — that discussed the threat of “the potential high-rise that may be proposed on the site of the present Maryland Manor apartments....”

Among those sent the e-mails, which continue through Oct. 27,

2005, were current President Erik Eriksson, then board director Larry Foust and current board director Lyman Paden.

One e-mail, sent by committee Chairman Hugh Rice Kelly on Oct. 27, 2005 told of being notified by a Southampton resident that survey work was being done at the Maryland Manor site “a couple of

months ago.”

It read in part:

“The surveyor said it was his understanding that the new buyer intended to erect a high-rise development on the property. We then contacted the present owners of Maryland Manor who did not confirm or deny the report. We have heard nothing more — but we’ve heard enough to take the matter seriously.”

The e-mail ended by saying even a project like the seven-story development then under consideration at the corner of Bolsover and Morningside streets would be objectionable.

“The latter site (at Bolsover) is already thoroughly commercial, but the residential community on the other side of the street will obviously be materially impacted,” it read.

The Houston City Council approved the abandonment and sale of the 2400 block Bolsover to Lamesa Properties on Aug. 15, 2007, to be used as part of a 250-unit, luxury living over retail project.

In a statement released Friday, Councilwoman Anne Clutterbuck said she first became aware a high-rise had been proposed at the Maryland Manor site Aug. 21, 2007, following a phone call from Andy Icken of the Public Works Department.

“I immediately called the directors of our local civic clubs and we

began efforts to stop the project in any way we could,” her statement read.

Clutterbuck was the outgoing president of the Southampton Civic Club during the time the e-mail exchanges took place. Except for an e-mail announcing the legal committee had been formed, she was not among the addressees.

Another e-mail sent Oct. 27, 2005 by Kelly was addressed to Kathie Easterly, manager of the University Place Association. It asked that a committee she was serving on with the city recommend a temporary moratorium on construction of buildings taller than 3½ stories.

He cited safety issues, including access for emergency vehicles in cases involving two-lane streets among his reasons.

That e-mail, also sent to members of the legal committee, referred to “serious threats of inappropriate high-rise construction in areas adjacent to single family residences (that) are pending at this time.”

Serving with Easterly at that time as president of the University Place Association was Julie Tysor, who was and continues to be an executive officer of the Appelt Co. and general partner of Lamesa.

The committee Easterly served on was not identified in any of the e-mails, which according to a source, ended abruptly following the fourth exchange on Oct. 27, 2005.

In all, five e-mails specifically mentioned a high-rise at Bissonnet and Ashby.