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## ***There must be a higher level of scrutiny***

This week we publish two recent letters from Attorney Peter Malia of Hastings Maine of Fryeburg, Maine, written in response to articles published in this newspaper, including one also published on the Ossipee Lake Alliance website.

Even though both letters are long, we think in fairness that they should be made available to the widest audience. We do it not only to counter the charge of bias on our part – we always strive to give our readers as much information from all sides of an issue that we can gather – but also because the risks of poorly-managed development on the most important water source in our county are too great.

Please read Attorney Malia's comments and critiques before continuing with our commentary on them.

Clearly what we are dealing with is, at base, a communication problem. Malia's letters touch on several instances where incomplete and misleading statements were made and entered into the public record without careful review and consideration.

The first instance was the letter from Bob Reynolds on Ossipee Lake Alliance letterhead that, it turns out, did not represent the official views of the Alliance. We have also spoken with David Smith and find it hard to believe that if he were consulted before the Reynolds letter was received that the engineers would have double-checked with him before submitting it as a letter of support. Of course, the Westward Shores developers can not be held responsible for disagreements within the Alliance, but due diligence should have been exercised.

In the second instance we (this newspaper as well as our reporter Carol Holyoake) are taken to task for relying on the written minutes of public meetings, both in regard to New Hampshire Audubon and the Green Mountain Conservation Group. As Malia admits, there were inconsistencies between what was said and recorded at the meetings and the views expressed by both Green Mountain and the Ossipee Lake Alliance when Holyoake contacted them, and that's what we reported.

This project, which more than doubles the number of campsites having access to Ossipee Lake, demands special care in its design and construction. Malia admits that a high level of scrutiny was expected. Our concern and the concern of the groups dedicated to protecting the lake and the critical aquifer that underlies it is that the process of reviewing and approving the expansion proposal be done openly and with care. The red flags Holyoake and others detected suggested that this was not happening.

We applaud Northgate Ossipee LLC, owner of Westward Shores, for demonstrating in these letters that they are taking the matter seriously and are prepared to aid in the open scrutiny it deserves. Organizations like the Green Mountain Conservation Group and Ossipee Lake Alliance as well as all of the rest of us who depend on the Ossipee aquifer for our water and the income that tourism brings deserve nothing less.