# Slide 1: WHERE IS THE LINE?

## SCRIPT

This started with two plastic skeletons, but the larger question is: where is the line?

I walked around the neighborhood because I wanted to understand what we actually look like — not hypothetically, but in real life.

And we're eclectic. There are lions, dogs, geese, angels, skeletons, flags, lights, planters, wreaths, wind chimes, and all kinds of things people use to make their homes feel like theirs.

These aren't complaints. I'm making the opposite point.

We don't all have to like the same things. I don't like every decoration I see, and I don't expect everyone to like mine.

But if we're going to have rules — and therefore violations of those rules — homeowners need an objective standard they can understand before enforcement begins.

Seasonal? Decorative? Permanent? Violation?

Where is the line?

# Slide 2: WHY I'M HERE

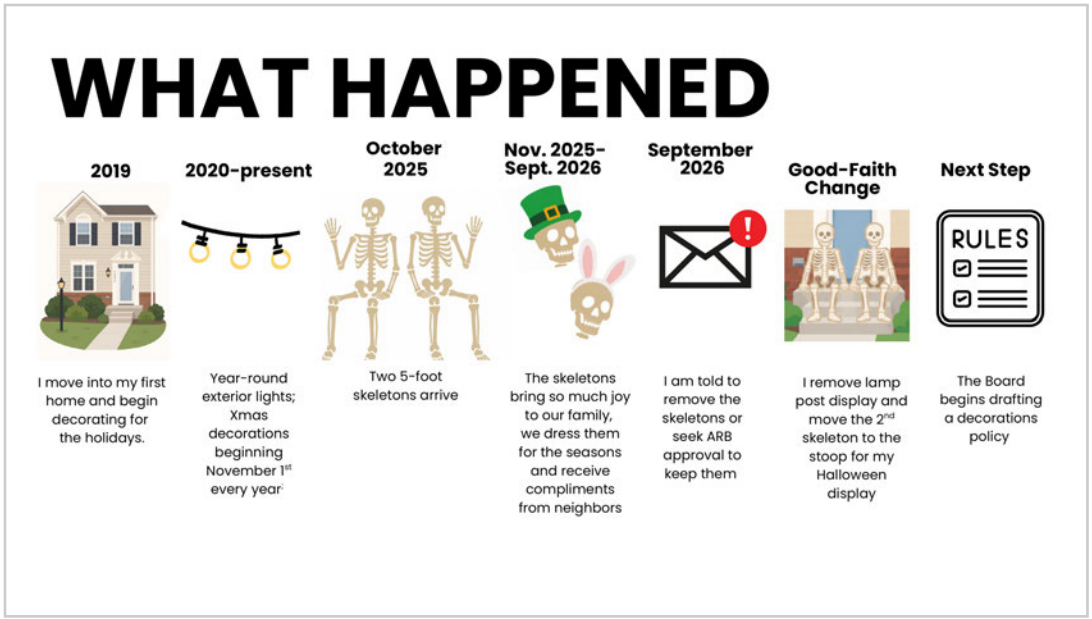
## SCRIPT

I'm not here to fight over two plastic skeletons, and I'm not asking for a special exception. I'm asking for clarity, consistency, and fairness.

When I was contacted, I tried to find the rule I had violated and couldn't find a clear written seasonal-decoration standard. Even so, I made changes to my display while asking for clarification.

My goal is a constructive solution for all homeowners — conversation, not confrontation.

# Slide 3: WHAT HAPPENED




## SCRIPT

I moved here in 2019 and have decorated ever since. We've had year-round exterior lights and put up Christmas decorations beginning November 1. Two five-foot skeletons arrived in October 2025. We enjoyed them so much that we began dressing them for different seasons, and neighbors complimented them. In September, I was told to remove them or seek ARB approval. I made a good-faith change by removing the lamp-post display and moving the second skeleton to the stoop. Now the Board is drafting a decorations policy, which I think is an opportunity to make the expectations clearer for everyone.

And regardless of what policy is ultimately adopted, I've already decided that the skeletons will come inside on November 1. That is a compromise I would have agreed to from the beginning if someone had simply asked.

I'd like to start next year's Halloween display on September 1, but if the rule is October 1, I will respect and follow it.

# Slide 4: ENCOURAGEMENT vs. ENFORCEMENT

## SCRIPT

The Association has encouraged residents to decorate. But I have not found a definition explaining when a removable decoration becomes a "permanent improvement," or whether seasonal and non-seasonal décor are treated differently.

And that raises a very basic consistency problem.

If a plastic skeleton that can simply be picked up and carried inside is a permanent improvement, why isn't a wind chime? Why isn't a yard flag? A porch goose? Lion statues?

I'm not suggesting that any of those things should require approval or be removed. I'm asking why one removable decorative object falls into this category while another doesn't.

And the answer can't depend on whether somebody complained about one of them. A complaint can identify something the Association should consider. It cannot, by itself, define what the rule is.

Unwritten expectations are impossible to apply consistently.

So again: where is the line?

# Slide 5: THE MISSING STEP

## SCRIPT

One email could have changed the entire trajectory of this situation. If I had been contacted after the first concern or told, “We don’t have a clear seasonal-decoration policy, but since Halloween is approaching, would you be willing to remove the skeletons by November 1 while the Board develops one?” I would have agreed to that. In fact, that is essentially the compromise I eventually reached on my own.

I know that approach can work because I’ve been the complaining neighbor.

I don’t like wind chimes. Years ago, one particular wind chime across the street bothered me. I spoke with my neighbor, and she moved it.

My dislike of wind chimes did not ban them for the entire neighborhood. My complaint started a conversation. It didn’t create a rule.

But when neighbors complained about my skeletons, I was told to remove them, with no indication that I could put them back out for Halloween or when they would be permitted again. That’s the distinction I’m struggling with.

The problem was the process, timing, framing, and lack of a defined rule. A complaint could have led first to a conversation and then, if the Board believed a broader standard was necessary, to a policy that applied to everyone. Instead, enforcement came before the policy existed.

## SCRIPT

I also want to acknowledge the human side. When you have an anxiety disorder, an anonymous complaint can feel much bigger than one person's objection. It can very quickly start to feel like everybody is looking at you.

That doesn't mean complaints shouldn't be addressed. It means how they are communicated matters.

And I recognize that managing a community is work. I'm not interested only in criticizing the process; I'm volunteering to help improve it.

# Slide 7: QUESTIONS FOR THE BOARD

## SCRIPT

I think a policy needs to answer four basic things.

What is the standard? What distinguishes seasonal décor, non-seasonal décor, and a permanent improvement? Does simply remaining outside for a long time transform an otherwise removable object into a permanent improvement?

What factors matter — duration, placement, size, quantity, visibility?

What actually requires ARB approval?

And what is the process? Will homeowners have input before adoption, and how will the final standard be communicated and applied consistently?

# Slide 8: WHAT I'M ASKING FOR

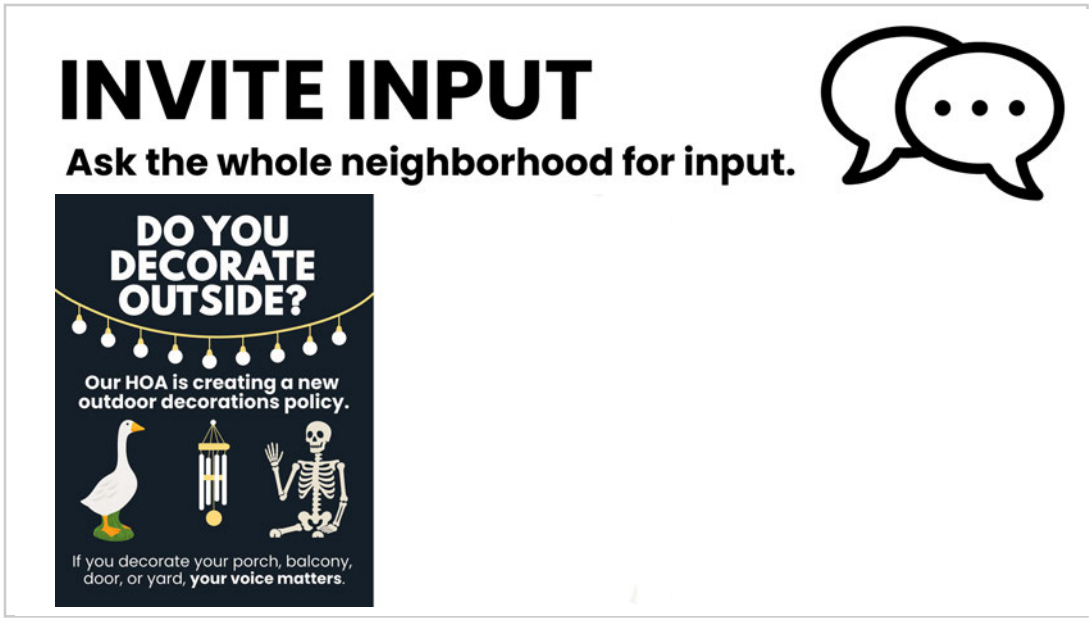
## SCRIPT

My request is simple: a clear written policy, homeowner input before adoption, consistent application, and the opportunity to help.

I'm not asking the Board to adopt my preferred policy tonight. I'm asking that homeowners know what is being proposed before it becomes enforceable, that comparable objects be treated under the same standard, and that everyone know the rule before they can be accused of violating it.

And I'm genuinely volunteering to help with that process.

# Slide 9: INVITE INPUT




## SCRIPT

This resolution will affect much more than skeletons. It could affect flags, wreaths, lights, yard figures, inflatables, porch decorations, cultural displays, memorials, and all kinds of things residents currently put outside their homes.

That's why I think residents should see the actual proposal before it's finalized rather than learning what it means when something they own becomes an enforcement issue.

The whole neighborhood should have a chance to understand what is being proposed and give input.

## SCRIPT

This experience also made me notice that complaints create a record, while compliments usually don't.

So a complaint is evidence that someone objects. It isn't necessarily evidence of community consensus.

A complaint can identify a problem, but a compliment can tell us what residents value. I'd like us to think about ways to hear both.

# Slide 11: LET'S NOT TURN THIS INTO A REALITY SHOW

## SCRIPT

And yes, I made a Real Housewives of Pantops logo because sometimes humor helps.

I really don't want this to become a reality show. I'd rather turn a small dispute into something useful: clearer expectations, better communication, resident input, and a policy everyone can understand before they are told they've violated it.

I don't need the Board to agree with me about skeletons. I do want us to agree that homeowners should be able to know the rules before they're told they've broken them.

Different vibes. Same neighborhood.

Let's choose conversation over conflict.

# MY LETTER

## Ask. Listen. Compromise.

Dear Neighbor,

I understand that you contacted the HOA about my decorations. I would genuinely like to understand what bothered you.

**You do not need to identify yourself to me.** If possible, I'd appreciate having the specific issue shared anonymously. I'm also open to having a private or mediated discussion.

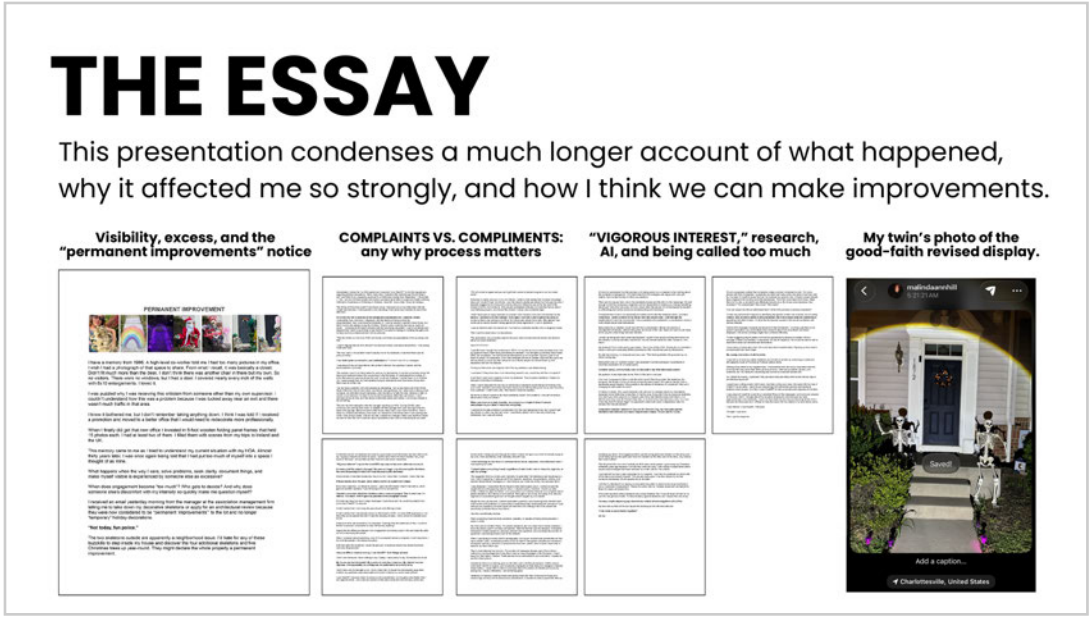
The decorations bring joy to my family, but I also care about being a good neighbor. Knowing whether the issue is the skeletons themselves, their size, or their placement could help us find a reasonable compromise.

I hope situations like this can be resolved through conversation whenever possible.

Leah

## SCRIPT

I included this letter because it shows the kind of neighbor-to-neighbor resolution I would prefer when possible. I don't need to know who complained. I'd appreciate knowing the specific issue, and I'm open to a private or mediated discussion if that could help us find a reasonable compromise.




## SCRIPT

This presentation condenses a much longer essay about what happened, why the process affected me so strongly, and what I think could improve. I included it for anyone who wants the fuller context; it isn't necessary to the main presentation.