

Aug. 29, 2013

Letters, Camden Herald

Pulling a fast one?

First of all I would like to go on record as supporting the establishment of a high-end alcohol/drug rehabilitation facility in the greater Midcoast area. Lord knows these are hard times and I think there are few families who have not been affected by alcohol or drugs. But I am also troubled by a few things.

In recent editions of your newspaper there have been full page ads touting the merits of just such a facility, but why is it there are no names attached to it? It feels to me like someone is trying to pull a fast one. And now we are supposed to get behind a special zoning change to allow the facility to be plunked down smack in the middle of a residential neighborhood. This seems like cronyism at its worst!

I would remind people that we have seen this before with both the Kodak Center and later MBNA. Both swept into town on enormous waves of cash and promised to be the economic saviors of the community. (P.S. A lot of folks including myself didn't know that we needed saving!) These companies bought up properties and threw lavish parties and then disappeared leaving a trail of broken down buildings in their wake - real estate which was ultimately sold for pennies on the dollar.

Now we are supposed to fall all over ourselves because of the rosy promises and the connections to a noted treatment facility in Boston.

I would agree that the former Fox Hill property has limited appeal given its size and current condition, but I don't believe it is up to the taxpayers to find a solution for a buyer who expects to be handed a zoning change because it is the only way the purchase will work for him/her. As a buyer it is clearly caveat emptor. You don't buy a multi-million dollar property and then try to change the ordinance to suit your needs. That is totally back asswards. Trying to ram a solution through in short order smacks of elitism and is a double standard and I personally find it offensive.

If Fox Hill does become an alcohol treatment facility, it needs to happen with the support of the neighbors, the town and adherence to existing ordinances and the master plan. This is a tough business environment and I have huge respect for all of the business owners who work their tails off to survive. I don't think you'll find that any of them are buying mansions in Malibu with their piles of excess cash. And I don't think that the promise of a few jobs is enough to warrant a zoning change and possibly set a precedent that may totally alter the appearance of the town forever.

So lets take time and work this though in an orderly manner. If we vote to change the ordinances to accommodate a new use, fine. It is the way democracy is supposed to work. But we also need to look at the long term consequences to make certain we are not creating a situation we will later come to regret.

Camden and Rockport are precious places. Change is inevitable. Some of it is good - some of it maybe not. Money can buy lots of things, but just remember what a mess money and lousy regulation has made of our national government. It is absolutely shameful! This could happen here on a smaller scale and the consequences would be no less devastating.

Dyke Messler, Camden

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