

## **A great deal for investors**

The local controversy over the proposed substance abuse treatment facility at Fox Hill has nothing to do with whether such facilities are good, or bad, needed or not. It is purely a zoning issue for residents of Camden. It is about whether Camden residents want such facilities in their residential neighborhoods instead of where they belong – in zones that already allow such facilities. Since this is a Camden only zoning issue, it is easy for people who don't live in Camden to be in favor of it because they don't have to live with the negative consequences in their neighborhoods. Camden residents cannot afford to be so cavalier.

The investors in this business have played on the emotions of those of us whose families have had personal experience with substance abuse issues. What is left out of this ploy is that the facility is NOT intended to help the people in need in our community. Instead, its minimum \$50,000 per month cost is targeted at very wealthy abusers from away.

In their economic presentation, the Fox Hill investors state their yearly costs to be about \$3.5 million. And, at the minimum charge of \$50,000 per month per patient, their income would be \$7.2 million per year at full occupancy. In this case, their investment would give them a profit of \$3.7 million, or more than 100 percent per year. Even at a more typical 80 percent occupancy, their profit would still be \$2.5 million, or 70 percent per year. A remarkably lucrative investment gain for them. Their sales pitch to sell the concept to the rest of us included a theoretical economic impact analysis which greatly exaggerated the benefit to Camden. But, instead of picking a site that is already zoned to allow such a facility in Camden, they chose the Fox Hill site because it benefits their wallets, not Camden. Fox Hill is a great deal for the investors, but NOT for Camden.

Like other towns that have allowed such exceptions to their zoning, Camden wouldn't be able prevent other medical treatment facilities from invading any of our residential neighborhoods. Law suits claiming discrimination based on income have resulted in very different kinds of substance treatment facilities coming into residential neighborhoods. Do you want a methadone treatment next door to you? I have seen what happens in other communities when the zoning ordinances are undermined in this way, and I would not want that happen here, nor should you.

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