

Alarm bells sounding

The recent Planning Board meeting Sept. 23 to discuss further the subject proposal by Fox Hill Realty LLC to establish a drug and alcohol rehab center in the Bay View Street residential area set off my alarm bells.

Instead of a session that weighed how this proposal was not a violation of the Town's Comprehensive Plan and the Coastal Zoning Ordinance, it morphed into several hours of the Planning Board's efforts to help the "Secret Investors" shape and reword the proposal to make it more favorable for submittal to a town vote.

It became quite apparent that the Planning Board has become sympathetic to elevating this issue to a town vote. A better course would be to uphold their duty to preserve the integrity and intent of the Comprehensive Plan, and the Coastal Residential Zoning Ordinance, and simply reject the proposal on those grounds and recommend that the investors and McLean consider one of the areas already zoned commercial.

The implications of a town vote possibly approving this proposal impact significantly on EVERY residential area of the town. There are numerous examples that demonstrate the problems that arise once spot zoning exceptions are granted. It becomes virtually impossible for a township where such transgressions occur to turn down additional similar spot zoning requests, see the example below of Malibu, Calif., a small town of approximately 12,000 residents. Such problems include lawsuits forcing towns to grant additional exception requests, resulting in the cancerous growth of others that occur once one is granted.

Everybody in Camden needs to think through the following question. "Do you want to have a drug and alcohol rehab center in your neighborhood?" If you want help in answering that question I would refer you to the recent New York Times article describing significant problems in Malibu, Calif., where the approval of one drug and alcohol rehab center led to, now, 35 such centers in the city, most all housed in "palatial" residences in residential areas. Sound familiar?

Another article worth reading is the very recent USA Today article entitled "Rehab Centers Struggle to Keep Drugs Out." It doesn't take a genius to further worry that these drug pushers, who follow these centers housing their former clients to these new locations in order to continue to supply them their needs, will want to expand their business base into our local schools so as to create future long term users.

This is not to suggest that McLean nor their investors would not have procedures in place to prevent such issues, but rather to recognize that not all additional providers of such services would implement similar precautions.

Furthermore, there is no guarantee that McLean would operate such a facility for the long term and who knows who, or what, would follow them into Fox Hill. I urge all Camden residents who love what this town has to offer, to carefully consider the implications associated with allowing such commercial enterprises to intrude into our residential areas. After digesting the impacts as described in these articles you reach the same conclusion that I have reached and your answer is a resounding 'no' to the Fox Hill Realty LLC proposal, please write to the Planning Board and advise them to uphold their duty and reject this request. They should not pass the buck by sending it to the Select Board and then on to a town vote early next year. If the Planning Board ignores our concerns and forwards it to the Select Board, then set your alarms and be sure to vote 'no' on this proposal when it goes to the town vote for a decision, otherwise we all will regret forever the problems it will bring down on Camden.

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