

See the positives in CMB's project

To the editor:

Indian Ridge — what's next? In the near future, the North Haven Planning and Zoning Commission will be making its decision on the application of CMB Capital Appreciation to construct an active adult community in the Warner Road area of the Montowese section of North Haven. Although I am no longer the legal representative of CMB, I was its attorney at the time that a previous application was about to be submitted by CMB. This application involved a simultaneous agreement with the town to swap land. The agreement proposed that the town swap approximately four acres of land-locked open space in return for the receipt of approximately nine acres of land to be dedicated as open space. The nine acres was to be added to an additional two plus acres of open space, and freed from its isolated environment.

The proposed plan at that time was for the construction of a 90-unit, active-adult development with detached upscale residences. Among its amenities, the development included a large clubhouse, and walking trails which provided access to a picturesque pond and the town's land-locked open space. The active-adult age restriction was voluntarily proposed by CMB to minimize traffic flow and protect the town's school system. This project appeared to be a win-win situation for the town and the developer. That is until politics entered the picture. Although members of the Democratic party of North Haven are now loathe to admit it, they made the proposed land swap into a controversial political football. The "stop the swap" campaign became so intense that CMB withdrew from the proposal, as it was never CMB's intent to cause such a political controversy. One of the biggest criticisms of the 90-unit development was that North Haven did not need upscale housing for its active adults, it needed affordable housing.

The present proposal by CMB is also receiving almost unprecedented political opposition, but this time from both the Democrats and Republicans. At the outset of this application, the political powers drew a line in the sand, causing the application to appear to be a battle between the town

and the developer and imploring our commissions to render a negative vote. A finger pointing contest now exists between the political parties concerning who is responsible for this affordable housing application. Perhaps our politicians have forgotten that town boards and commissions must remain impartial and are bound not to prejudge any application which may be offered. Our town commissions have been placed in the precarious position of attempting to exercise objectivity in the face of strong political influence which was exhibited at the infant stages of the application process. This is not to suggest that politicians may never comment on any applications submitted before local commissions. It is simply highly unusual and extremely inappropriate, in this writer's view, for political opposition to be voiced before all of the facts are on the table concerning the impact, if any, of the proposal on the health, safety and welfare of the community.

What are the facts? The facts are that this new proposal by CMB is for a state-of-the-art active-adult community on 42 plus acres of land with multi-million dollar amenities, unlike any other in New England. The amenities include a 19,000-square-foot clubhouse with an indoor pool, golf, tennis, bocci, horseshoes and a walking trail with exercise stations leading to, once again, land-locked town open space and a picturesque pond. An open minded objective analysis of this proposal would take into consideration that the expense of offering these amenities necessitates a larger volume of units. This is especially true since this project will be offering a percentage of "affordable" units for sale. To the credit of CMB, the age restriction limiting the sale of units to active adults age 55 and over has been expanded to include a provision that will not allow residents of the community to be under 18 years of age. Obviously, these restrictions are still being offered by CMB to protect our school system as much as possible and minimize traffic.

Neighborhood concerns are always an issue. I was raised on Montowese Avenue in a residence that is still family owned and is located between the highway and Quinnipiac Avenue. I watched Montowese Avenue turn from a dead end

road with no traffic into a major thoroughfare. Although the impact of the CMB project will be nowhere near what has happened to Montowese Avenue, I can truly empathize with and understand the neighbors' fears. Progress is often perceived as necessary evil, but it doesn't necessarily have to be evil. In hindsight, I can only suggest that an objective analysis be made to consider what is being proposed in light of all possible alternatives. Suppose CMB eliminates the amenities and the age restrictions that are being voluntarily proposed. Then, after Planning and Zoning denial, CMB successfully appeals the denial in Superior Court under the Affordable Housing Act of the state of Connecticut. What will North Haven then do about its school system? Imagine what will happen with a much younger population in the area. If you don't think such a result is possible, ask people who live in the towns of Redding, New Milford, Brookfield, Bridgewater and Bethel, just to name a few. Closer to home, ask what the people of Hamden think about the Dadio Farm project after court-ordered approval was obtained for 256 units on only 11.8 acres under the Affordable Housing Act. Hamden is now scrambling to purchase the site by attempting to exercise its power of eminent domain. Hamden's success and the ultimate cost of exercising its power, if it is able to do so, remains a question. This is not the result that CMB is looking for, despite all of the political interference. It may, however, be the end result if CMB is forced to waste additional time and money in its efforts to build what started out to be and still is a quality development that North Haven can be proud of. As a concerned lifelong citizen of North Haven with a professional office in the Montowese section, I sincerely hope that North Haven does not experience an outcome similar to that of the town of Hamden.

Anthony J. Elia Jr.
North Haven

Increase veterans' exemptions

To the editor:

There would be no freedom without our veterans.

"For a people who are free, and who mean to remain so, a well organized and armed militia is their best security." So said Thomas Jefferson.

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