

PAX Tab Letter

Affordable housing not only for dense areas

Wednesday, April 30, 2003

Brookline PAX is chagrined to read a March 27 letter by the Fisher Hill Neighborhood Association ("FHNA") on the subject of the two reservoir sites in their area. Undoubtedly on behalf of much of "North Brookline" (at least Pcts. 1-4, and 7-11, i.e. at least 9/16 precincts), and also on behalf of many others across Brookline, it is disappointing to see - especially so explicitly - a message that affordable housing belongs only in densely-developed areas. Especially after the two recent, months-long, and Herculean Chapter 40B struggles in North Brookline, caused in part by our significant town-wide deficit under the 10 percent threshold level for affordable units, it is astounding to read the FHNA urging a "gated" soccer field on the state-side 10 acre site, and "creatively" using land proceeds from the sale of the town-side 5-acre site (perhaps by selling the land to abutting homeowners) for affordable housing- but only elsewhere. Not only would that result in Brookline's huge density disparities continuing, but it also would be a significant lost opportunity to make an immediate dent in the 10 percent Chapter 40B shortfall .

As we said in our TAB op-ed on Jan. 22, which is available at brooklinepax.org, "Too soon to throw in the housing towel:" "[T]he town must abjure the myth that increased density is only appropriate in already-dense parts of town. ... [L]ow and moderate income housing, and some selective density increases, belong in all neighborhoods According to Open Space 2000, the 'planning area' of St. Aidan's ... has the least open space per capita, 24 percent of the townwide average, 7 percent that of "Fisher Hill/Middle Brookline," and 4 percent that of 'South Brookline.' ... [W]e must push... for ways to obtain more low and moderate income housing, ... [inter alia] more priority for housing [uses for] state and town properties."

The last few years have seen some missed opportunities for converted government properties (e.g. 1010 Commonwealth, and the Webster St. hotel). Numerous residents of the Fisher Hill area disagree with the extreme position of the FHNA; and we hope the latter will reconsider their short-sighted approach. We especially hope the selectmen will look out for all of Brookline.

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Co-chair