

Many folks responded to the Fishtown column “Cut it out!” published in this space a week ago. But the follow-up is kind of a pie-in-the-face chapter ending.

This writer mis-ascribed the owners’ intentions when they first razed the top of their lot of almost all the mighty oak trees and all of the ground cover and smaller trees from their new wildlife sanctuary neighborhood, then clearcut the lower portion all the way through to Niles Pond. But they didn’t put that huge hole where a sanctuary used to stand just to expand and improve their view.

No, apparently, it was for the next guy! For whatever reason, after owning it for a year, they decided that the time was ripe to expand their view, get the price up and flip, flip, flippity flip that house — like a juicy burger on a hot skillet — you know: chop, chop, ching ching, bye bye. The city Conservation Commission voted unanimously to cite them with an enforcement action. But they’ll be gone (positive) and the new owners will think that’s their regular view (negative). But is this the new normal for all this coming Gloucester development? Isn’t this is what it’s going to repeat itself over and over on the island? The Flippers have already landed in force. Many more are circling. They can’t wait for “by right” rezoning to hit. That’s why Eastern Pointers fight so hard against increasing the Eastern Point density as severely as certain planners want.

Because then there will be twice as many clear cutters and view expanders, twice as many floodlights and cars dripping oil — and half as many wild animals and birds. A big, fat “Boo!” to the cutters and to zoning proposals that ensure there will be many more.

Then there was the meeting at City Hall last Monday evening to learn about how the positioning/ locating of transit-oriented development would work. The moderator was somewhat taken back. He said they’d expected 60-75 or so. It felt more like over 200. The place was packed to the gills. Now some people might try and refer to it as a dog-and-pony show. I thought it was more like a kindergarten graduation. The speaker/consultant tried to stay on program but it felt like the crowd’s attention kind of wandered around like a small child. When there were too many generalizations, there were many clarifying questions hurled up from the back of the room, especially when the presenter broke into Consultant speak. It wasn’t an unruly crowd, nor was it ruly. I wondered whether this was what they usually encountered? Sometimes the presenters and planners seemed a little too happy that we are facing this threat. But when, for example, the emcee threw out the old smokescreen rezoning cliché that the 2,270 units weren’t going to be built under the TOD — just allowed for — most of the room broke into laughter. Developers tend to fill every lot they are allowed and the crowd, at times, seemed wiser than the experts anticipated.

There were times when the consultant would describe a 100-acre TOD district in which he’d say “now this 100-acre tract could support 1,000 units” and half the crowd would groan and look sick to their stomachs, while up front, a city councilor and a few of his planning pals would practically lick their lips at the thought of a thousand units plunked down anywhere or everywhere on this island. But the presenters seemed so naive about what really happens outside their computer modeling and in the real world. They kept going back to: It’s not GOING to happen, you just have to ZONE to ALLOW it to happen. Are they really that naive or just spoon-

feeding the short attention spans of the public?

Most of the hardest questioners were women and they asked very serious and smart questions with a somewhat challenging tone. The emcee did finally answer the question that has eluded everyone, that “No! the existing units in the TOD districts will not count in that 2,270 total.” They got us coming and going. Investment partnerships, hedgers, trusts, real estate acquisition companies, speculators they’re all going to be wanting a piece of the action. The reality that a large portion of new building in Gloucester will be second-home and thirdhome buyers, with plenty of flippers taking advantage of the Oklahoma Land Rush that will be the TOD — and all “by right”, where you might not know until the bulldozers show up.

A resident asking for a show of hands saw more than half of the huge crowd raise their hands against the MBTA Communities Act. Never thought I’d find myself envying people from Milton.

Not sure I was alone.

Gloucester resident Gordon Baird is an actor and musician, co-founder of Musician Magazine and producer of “The Chicken Shack” community access TV show.

Powered by TECNAVIA

Copyright (c)2024 Gloucester Daily Times, Edition 04/01/2024