

Dear Barbara,

I was at the meeting on Wednesday evening and wanted to share my views on this development. However, I was getting late to another teleconference and had to leave at 7.45. May apologies for such a tight schedule and not sharing this in person.

Developments are often a contentious issue, for those in the neighborhood, since it will change the landscape and some valuation for the local residents. At the same time, if we don't develop the community, we will face rising costs and lower values for everyone in New Castle. Tax revenue of about 5 million, housing for seniors and the local workforce are great positive aspects of the project that have value to our town and I support it.

I look at towns that have refrained from such developments and observe that the results can be quite disappointing. Kings College in Briarcliff is a very good example of what happened when the land and the buildings were left undeveloped for several years and almost abandoned. There was crime and dilapidated buildings. No real estate owner will continue to maintain the Readers Digest property in the good pristine condition, unless it provides value and revenue. We have to find a fair, quick and good way for the property to bring productive value to the owner, to the community and without significant downside to the beauty of the area.

An extreme case of two neighboring large towns and their development philosophy is Niagara Falls NY and across the falls the Niagara Falls, Ontario. On the American side of the falls, there are boarded up buildings, closed down businesses and low quality motels, while on the Canadian side there is thriving tourism, hotels and entertainment. I am not saying that all developments are good, all I am saying is that we have to provide a welcoming environment to the developers, since they take risks and bring value to the community. On this particular project, I support the plan since it has been built on good foundation.

I think we are off base when we are so focused on the new kids joining our school system. Counting the number of children coming to our schools and figuring out ways to block more admissions is like closing the door on the future. Boston thrives on the east coast among all the major cities in Northeast, because young students bring energy and leadership to the town. The children and young adults of Chappaqua, also get a great education and come back to fuel the future growth and innovation in the community. Also with children, we have younger families moving in and they improve the commerce in the village.

Let us find time to grab coffee or lunch, and I would love to share my views further with you and other council members. I am thrilled to be a Chappaqua resident and want our community to continue to thrive.

Bal Agrawal
July 26, 2009