

Burlington Union

Patriot welcomes chance to work with town

By Stephen Rice and Joseph Zink

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Burlington -

In a guest column by John J. Ryan last week, he questioned whether the development proposal before the Landlocked Parcel Study Committee is in the best interest of the town.

As the parcel's option holder, we welcome the opinion of every Burlington resident, including Mr. Ryan's. To be fair, the development ideas we have presented to the Study Committee are only concepts and we welcome community input to determine the highest and best use of the parcel.

As we haven't yet discussed some of Mr. Ryan's points publicly with the Town, we can understand why he made certain assumptions. We believe that our conceptual proposal addresses many of his concerns, and ultimately our vision may not be all that different from his.

First, a concern was expressed that the Erickson Retirement Community is only within reach to a "specific socio-economic group" and would not be affordable to Burlington seniors. That is just not true. In fact, the Erickson model can be realized by the majority of Burlington seniors, and we have compiled data and demographic information to support that. Over the past several weeks, we have held tours of another Erickson community, Linden Ponds in Hingham, to show Burlington residents first hand how this premier senior retirement community is affordable. Many of the tour participants were pleasantly surprised by not only the affordability factor, but also, the quality and breadth of services, and the integration of natural green space.

Based on the Town of Hingham's experience with Linden Ponds, this development minimizes impacts on Town emergency and elder services. The Town has not hired one additional town employee to address the impacts of Linden Ponds, as all services are handled by Erickson.

Additionally, it was suggested that the proposed life sciences campus may never materialize. We respectfully disagree. There is a significant movement afoot by the Patrick Administration to grow the MA life sciences industry through the recently passed \$1 billion life sciences bill. This site is uniquely poised to take advantage of that initiative and attract the types of life science companies that have thus far chosen to locate elsewhere. Timing is everything, and we are confident that the time is right for a life sciences campus in Burlington.

We know from personal experience that a life sciences campus would bring millions of dollars of tax revenue and hundreds of high paying job opportunities to Burlington without the impacts that a traditional office or retail development would create. At Lexington Technology Park in

Lexington, Shire HGT is currently occupying the majority of the 100-acre campus. They selected Lexington over Cambridge and other locations for reasons that would also apply to the landlocked parcel. In recent years, 27 life science companies totaling 1.7 million square feet have moved to Waltham and Lexington alone. These are highly desirable companies and the wave of the future for Massachusetts' economy, yet none have located in Burlington.

As part of our proposal, we have incorporated principles of smart growth by suggesting a modest amount of workforce housing to complement the life science campus. This concept decreases traffic impacts and allows for companies to attract and retain employees who would otherwise seek housing elsewhere.

We agree that preservation of open space is critical. Our initial concept plan shows a significant portion of the site to be set aside as permanent open space. However, it is also critical that this space be accessible to Burlington residents. In fact, because of the lack of access, Burlington residents cannot enter the site legally today. The Erickson and life sciences components serve as the economic engine to provide access and these uses have been deliberately chosen because they also integrate the natural beauty and resources of the parcel into the development. As Burlington residents have seen on our tours, both Linden Ponds and Lexington Technology Park offer numerous walking and biking trails integrated throughout, and each has acres of dedicated open space.

It was also mentioned that Burlington does not have a community pool and is perhaps in need of additional recreation fields. We welcome the opportunity to work with the town to consider recreational uses for Burlington residents. For example, at Linden Ponds, Erickson allows the Hingham swim team to use the on-site pool for practices and swim meets.

In conclusion, as the column mentions, partial development of this land is necessary to create the revenue to provide access. With our proposal, Burlington would receive approximately \$80 million in tax revenue over the next ten years — in addition to the land's purchase price and building/permit fees. We believe that the combination of a senior retirement community and life science campus provides an attractive long-term revenue generator for the town, while offering substantial community accessible open space for all to enjoy.

We hope that we can continue to have meaningful dialogue with all stakeholders in town to deliver a project that we can be proud of and will benefit generations of Burlington citizens.

Stephen Rice and Joseph Zink are principals of Patriot Partners.