

Aasen

Baron's South-RTM P & Z Committee-April 6, 2015

My name is Martha Aasen, I live at 31 Ellery Lane in Westport, in a house that my husband Larry Aasen and our children moved into in June of 1963, almost 52 years ago. I am here tonight as one of four petitioners who are asking the RTM to overturn the P & Z decision to declare all of Baron's South open space. My petition requests: that the RTM overturn the rezoning decision of the Planning and Zoning Commission that changed the usage of the Baron's South property to DOSRD#2 (Dedicated Open Space and Recreation District #2) to revert the property back to its original purpose when purchased, which was for Town/Municipal use.

Westport is the town we love, and have been involved in through these many years. The up and the down of Westport is that we get involved, we fuss and we fight about the things we believe in, the directions we think the town should go and the projects we feel about strongly. When we moved here, parents were jumping on the roof of Hillspoint School to see if it could withstand the weight of snow. I have stood before the RTM for Project Concern, I have spoken in favor of the Conservative Synagogue to build on that same Hillspoint Road. This afternoon I went through my Baron's South file, it dates back more than seven years, copies of talks before the RTM, the P & Z, to that body, most recently on March 5.

Tonight, I am here to ask that you the RTM's P & Z Committee, to give your most careful consideration to our request that the RTM overturn the P & Z decision, thus allowing the property to revert back to its original purpose when purchased which was for Town/Municipal use. I believe this would give us all a fair way for the process to play out.

We have had more than seven years of talk, innumerable meetings, leadership by two successive town administrations and now a yes vote by only four P & Z members, has stopped the Baron's South proposal, before it could be fully considered. I would hope that the RTM would overturn this P & Z decision and that the P & Z would then, in turn, grant Jonathan Rose's recent reworked new proposal a complete and fair hearing. I believe that given this opportunity for a complete, comprehensive hearing and input by people of good will on all sides of this complicated issue, an alternative plan might be found, a compromise might be reached. The Baron's South property is large enough for both affordable housing and a considerable amount of open space.

Three years ago, on November 11, 2012, I spoke to the RTM in favor of using a small part, only four to seven acres, of public land, Baron's South, for mixed income rental housing for our Senior Citizens. At that time, Westport had a population of 25,749, and according to data from the 2010 census, there were 4,226 among us 65 or older. That was a little over 16th of our total population. We had 628 men and women over 85. Today, only three years later, here are the figures, total population, 26,391, increase of only 642, but now we have 5,802 over 60, and, which gives us 21.9% seniors. Our senior population is growing. I myself am 85, my husband, Larry is 92. Larry and I, like most of the town's seniors want to stay in Westport, a town we love, where we have raised our children, taken part in our civic life, our religious life, paid our taxes, and are now, many of us, proud owners of our homes. But, many of us are, house poor, living on fixed incomes, but having to pay our taxes and all of our bills.

We do not have a waiting list for our long hoped for, now in limbo, housing on Baron's South, but our Human Services department keeps a list of people who have been waiting to hear, hoping to hear, that they might move there someday and live in reasonably affordable, close to town, comfortable homes on public land which Westport has made available for our citizens. When last I checked, that "interest" list contained 300 names. This is only an "interest" list, Westport's real waiting lists for affordable housing, Canal Park, Hales Court, 1655 Post Road (the old Trailer Park being rebuilt) are full up and now closed. There are many waiting for space on these waiting lists. Westport is poorly served for affordable housing for everyone, not only for seniors. Here is another advantage, a very important one, to having affordable housing on Baron's South. Westport is far below the 10% affordable housing mandated by the infamous 830G stature. It is estimated that Baron's South housing would give us at least 31 points which could be used to ask for a moratorium on 830G.

Tonight, I want to add my voice to that of many others to ask you to support our petitions to overturn the P & Z and thus allow comprehensive fair consideration of the Jonathan Rose housing proposal that has been carefully planned, studied and designed to meet the physical and financial needs of a vital segment of our community. I am sure that you, Westport's elected, selected representatives will give this issue your most careful and thoughtful consideration. Thank you.

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