

ROBERT C. GIBSON, JR.

Misdirection from Sound Beach Ave. developer

Great advice from “Mad Men’s” advertising genius, Don Draper: “If you don’t like what’s being said, change the conversation.” His theory worked. He was able to change the subject from the dangers of smoking to a conversation about the brand that bragged, “Smoke mine. They’re toasted.”

Toasted just sounds good. Everybody likes toast. Toast is healthful, right?

This is exactly the clever tactic used by the developers of the 143 Sound Beach Ave. project. They changed the conversation from real planning and zoning issues concerning their apartment building project’s height and size, the number of units, ground cover,

excavation, traffic congestion, surface water run-off, wetlands, school capacities, and neighborhood character, to one that’s more “toasted,” i.e. “affordable housing”.

Actually, their project would not meet local P&Z guidelines were it not for the developers suddenly designating 20 percent of their 44 apartments as “affordable housing units,” because Connecticut State Statute 8-30g allows a developer to ask the courts to override local zoning decisions if developers make at least 10 percent of their units “affordable.”

The goal of the state’s affordable housing edict is not to create

buildings that would not otherwise meet local codes. To allow developers to bypass and override the local P&Z articles is a back door entry and disingenuous, in the least.

Where’s the talk about traffic congestion, over-crowding Old Greenwich School, surface water runoff, protecting wetlands ...?

It’s gone!

The developers’ conversation misdirection is intended to silence opposition to the project by accusing opponents of being anti-affordable housing NIMBYs.

And there you have it. The argument has been diverted from discussions about the merits of the project to accusations against

the residents who oppose the project. Classic misdirection.

The “conversation” needs to be refocused on those merits and not on the nine “affordable” units as though they were the only things being built.

Then there’s Sam Romeo, chairman of the Greenwich Housing Authority. A true visionary, he has been very successful in providing opportunities for low-to moderate-income families. The quality and quantity of affordable housing in Greenwich has been accomplished by Sam through fiscally responsible asset management of our town resources, and developing partnerships with our residents. Sam has never degrad-

ed the quality of life of others. Rather, he has managed to find win-win situations for the town and all interested parties.

The 143 Sound Beach Ave. project is not an affordable housing solution like those Romeo and the Greenwich Housing Authority have managed to bring to our town. It is a for profit commercial enterprise that should stand on its own merits and fit within our community P&Z guidelines.

Were it not for the “toasted” wrapper of affordable housing around the discussion, the project would go up in smoke.

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