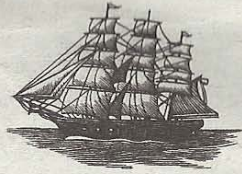


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READERS' FORUM

K'port must think deeply about Lower Village development

Serious questions are finally being raised regarding development in Lower Village. At Kennebunk's Planning Board workshop May 29 in a long overdue discussion on "big picture" consequences of cumulative growth, board members began to raise critical issues. Jonathan Whitehouse said, "It's not just about parking. What scares residents is the scale intended for businesses in Lower Village. What's going to happen if everyone does what The Grand and Tia's did? Where does it stop?" Theron Wentworth asked Town Planner Judy Bernstein, "How did Tia's get to be a staff review project rather than the committee? I thought that anything that would have a big effect would go to a committee review?"

Part of the big picture discussion must confront the prevailing philosophy in Town Hall, which makes decisions based on the principle that any business is good business for Kennebunk; if it's legal, let them build for it generates tax revenues and taxpayers will benefit. This is nothing more than that old time delusion tune best described by John

Kenneth Galbraith: "If one feeds the horse enough oats, some will pass through to the road for the sparrows."

The staff review process is responsible for several highly objectionable approvals that would probably not have survived public scrutiny (e.g. Tia's Topside). To digitally record these reviews for later broadcast on the web solves nothing, for decisions would already have been made without challenge by the public. The process should be abolished. It's too dangerous.

Strong leadership is required by the selectmen and Planning and Site Plan Review boards to publicly discuss the most serious challenge regarding future development: a need for a change of attitude, of philosophy and of process to insure that the voice of pro-business residents is of absolutely equal value when deciding the merits of any proposed development. It would be good for all the horses and sparrows in the villages of Kennebunk.

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