

Letter to the Editor 2/20/22

During a February 2nd presentation to the Barnstable Housing Committee, The Housing Assistance Corporation (HAC) presented a slide titled, Housing Problems. The problems are simple; “affordability gap,” “lack of apartments,” and “NIMBY” (Not in my backyard).

To solve the Cape’s housing crisis we simply need to build affordable apartments and neutralize NIMBYs.

I believe the article in the February 20th issue of the Cape Cod Times, “Holding off on progress. Housing leaders: Land Trust derailing effort to address crisis on Cape” was intended to neutralize NIMBYs. This presumes that anyone that raises concerns about development is a NIMBY.

In the article, Ryan Castle, CEO of the Cape and Islands Association of Realtors said that the Cape hasn’t had development in decades. Alisa Magnotta, CEO of the Housing Assistance Corporation (HAC) worried that developers will be scared away if Lennar doesn’t succeed in developing Twin Brooks.

Just about two miles away from Twin Brooks, a proposed 270-unit apartment development similar in style to that proposed at Twin Brooks is undergoing Cape Cod Commission review. The developers don’t seem to be scared of the process. They aren’t running away. In fact they agreed at a Barnstable Town Council meeting to offer more affordable units than originally planned. And in Independence Park, stand the newly constructed 225-unit Everleigh and 120-unit Village Green apartments.

Maybe questions are being raised about the Twin Brooks site because there are valid reasons not to densely develop that site. Those reasons might have nothing to do with being anti-housing or NIMBY.

One such reason might be that the Twin Brooks site is at the center of a failed water ecosystem.

Aunt Betty's Pond to the north of Twin Brooks has more Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in it than any other pond on Cape Cod. Betty's Pond feeds one of the twin brooks. The Cape Cod Times ran a story on PFAS in our ponds. Stewart's Creek, to the south of the site is a failed estuary. The Cape Cod Times ran a story on that. To the east of the site are overgrown cranberry bogs; never remediated. They're remediating the Bayview Bogs east of the Cape Cod hospital and for good reason. The Cape Cod Times ran a story on that. Read it.

And finally, there is the sewer. We must develop where there are sewer lines and I wholeheartedly agree with this. There are sewer lines at Twin Brooks but there is something else beneath Twin Brooks; the effluent from the sewage treatment plant. The effluent flows through the entire water ecosystem at Twin Brooks. Wouldn't we be better off creating the healthiest system we can to ensure the water entering Nantucket Sound is as clean as it can be?

You know if we save twin brooks there is a great chance it'll save us right back.