

The Barnstable Patriot

Letters: Build housing away from the coastline for clean water's sake

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Sept. 10, 2021

On Thursday, Sept. 9, MEPA sponsored a walk of Twin Brooks Golf Course, the site of a proposed 312-unit, 14-building, market-rate rental housing complex in Hyannis. It was amazing to be on the land. I've got to get a kayak and go back and explore Joshuas Brook.

Karen McGuire, president of Save Twin Brooks, brought a map because the site engineer did not bother. I am literally drooling over the property thinking of all the restoration possibilities, especially since right before bed I was watching The Plight of the Grassland Birds on PBS.

Looking again at the FEMA flood maps, the proposed exit road (required by Fire Dept.), over where Stewarts Creek goes under Main Street east of the rotary, is likely to be underwater in significant flood events. There is a manmade pond there, and it's very low elevation. They think that's the evacuation route in a hurricane, but it will be underwater. That needs to be challenged in public hearings. The engineer seemed not to want us to go anywhere near any of the ponds or Joshuas Brook to the west. There is a lot of water in Joshuas Brook right now. We observed a beaver on the bank of the manmade pond down in the southern portion of the property. Such adaptable

animals, chomping away on whatever s/he could find. A red-tailed hawk and a mocking bird flew overhead. Primo edge habitat for hunting.

We will need to take issue with their Wetlands Protection Act flagging and pending Notice of Intent. The engineer said they did not plan to file an ANRAD, which would give Cape Cod Commission staff and Barnstable Conservation Commissioners the opportunity to review each and every wetlands flag to see if it was placed correctly. Might the CCC have a conflict of interest, since they are also charged with planning and housing?

The developer hired Baxter Nye to perform a Natural Resources Inventory, which was the most paltry report I've ever read, shocking in its lack of substance. We should insist that an independent inventory be performed by someone who is actually motivated to examine the biodiversity onsite. There could be rare turtles (diamond back terrapin and box turtle) in the brooks. Has anyone checked the ponds for vernal pool characteristics?

One local attendee on the site walk remarked, "we don't have beaver here" when I pointed out the beaver. That kind of attitude needs to be challenged in the biggest way as we have been "gaslighted" to think this parcel is ecologically insignificant.

Anyone with any biological sense can look at Google Maps and see how important the watershed is. By the way, FEMA flood maps also show Fawcetts and Bettys Ponds overflowing in heavy floods. These are both collectors and feeders of the watershed draining from north to south through Twin Brooks and into the salt marsh—another reason why Barnstable needs to pay attention to its own Open Space

and Recreation and Climate Action Plans, which state all new construction should be AWAY FROM THE COAST. When I mentioned that, the engineer retorted, "Yeah, and we are."
Thank goodness we got another week extension for comments.
Thanks for that, LMC.

Bettina Dabney Abe, Hyannis Port