

Big Guns

From January 2000 Cape Cod Times

Picture a gigantic set of guns built to defend the entrance to a bay from a mountain top high above. The guns range extends over the horizon and easily dominate the area. The camera zooms out. Then you notice the guns are facing the wrong way !

Over the past ten years, about 14,000 new homes have been built on Cape Cod. Those new homes have caused roads to become clogged and schools to bulge. Our population has swelled to 240,000. Face it - the Cape is different than it was ten years ago. Everywhere you go there's a waiting line.

May I call it what it is ?

There's too many people here.

Yes the Land Bank is going to help a little. But it can't possibly help the way the Cape Cod Commission could help if only it's charter allowed it to effectively ban more residential building. They are the only body with enough regional power to potentially make a difference.

Right now their only real effect is to compile excellent regional statistics and stop any one from building a place for all these new people who have moved here to go shopping. God forbid.

But that can change. They are entering into a review period that can actually result in their ability to have a positive effect on the Cape. It would be possible for them to become armed to take on the biggest problem facing the Cape - residential over building.

In their original charter, the Commission was designed to control commercial construction as well as new subdivisions of land. Most everyone who had land suitable for residential construction broke it into lots in the last Real Estate boom. Those existing lots are not under the domain of the Commission.

But while the talented and well intentioned creators of the Commission framed a very powerful organization with an excellent motivation and a highly qualified staff, it was only armed to stop icons of progress, not the substance of the Capes demise.

Commercial Buildings are an icon to the public - we don't want to think of the Cape as just like everywhere else so we don't allow Home Depot, Walmart, Dunkin Donuts in E. Sandwich, Burger King in E. Harwich, etc, etc. simply for ambience reasons. They don't burden the roads, schools, municipal service, etc. like homes do. The Commission has blocked small commercial building by local enterprise simply by it's existence. It costs too much to appear before them so only the top nationals can afford it.

If you have an opinion in this regard, you should make it known to the Commission. They will be in Public Hearings shortly designed to hear the voice of the people. This is as important as any vote on any election day.

It is possible for the Commission, and probably only the Commission, to save the Cape from a total buildout, but only if they are re-focused in the correct direction.