

CanalSide approval was a long time coming

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Len Cubellis was a much younger man when he submitted his plans for a hotel, conference center, restaurant and executive golf course to the Cape Cod Commission. That was eight years ago.

The commission wasn't buying the size, scale, scope, traffic impacts and open space credits equation and asked Cubellis to revise his plans for the tract above the Bourne rotary.

Since then, while going back to the drawing board, he retained Hyannis attorney Patrick Butler, who knows how to talk to the commission and interact with agency staffers in their critical review prior to full agency votes.

Critics routinely told the commission at public hearings that the support Cubellis did garner in official and community circles did not represent the will of the Bourne public; that elected officials did not represent the voters.

Cubellis courted various boards of selectmen and sought support. Two boards voted to give it to him, even though CanalSide critics at the commission overlooked that aspect of official Bourne input over the years.

Cubellis also has 300 Chapter 40B dwellings on the drawing board. The request is being reviewed by the Massachusetts Housing Agency. This part of CanalSide Commons planning was not reviewed by the Cape Cod Commission, which voted 10-3 otherwise to support the plan.

Cubellis heads to friendlier territory now; notably the Bourne Planning Board where some members detest the commission, others like its planning expertise but question its regulatory authority and others simply want Bourne to withdraw from the agency.

"The Lower Cape, the real Cape Cod out there, was still against the plan," said Chris Farrell, Bourne Planning Board chairman. "They never liked it. They still don't like it. Their Cape is different."

"They've gotten the message," board member Clem DeFavero said of the commission. "Bourne wants to get out. Other towns are thinking about it. It's not just one town any more. There's people who want to withdraw, and they've seen that. They had to approve Lennie's plan."

Bourne was well represented at the commission decision. John Johnson of Pocasset, the former Bourne representative to the agency, opposed the Commons. So did Helen Bresnahan of the CanalSide Acquisition Task Force, which tried purportedly to deal with Cubellis and considered ways to sidestep the Commons plan advancing to fruition.

Some task force members insist the town should buy the CanalSide tract, even if it uses up all of Bourne's Community Preservation Act funding over two decades.

Barry Motta, the retiring superintendent of the Upper Cape Regional Technical School, supports the proposal; he sees a new intersection at Sandwich Road that will enhance his school's access to the heavily traveled roadway.

Tom Moccia, a former Cubellis representative and now president of the Buzzards Bay Village Association, supports the plan. He says the group endorsed it because Bourne residents "have long been denied convenient access to meet their modern retail needs and this investment will trigger an effort to restore contemporary retain amenities to all residents and visitors."

Moccia does not mention traffic tangles, an issue that has shadowed everything Cubellis has suggested and planned for the old Panorama Motel tract stretching back to Camp Edwards.

"That's the issue," said James Mulvey, who attended the commission meeting last week. "Traffic, traffic, traffic!"

There is a 30-day period in which the commission's decision can be appealed to Barnstable Superior Court.