
Editorial

T.C. - Y.B.W.W. 10/19/07

Perspective please

The Oct. 16 Board of Selectmen meeting in Topsfield got a little testy, feisty or boisterous, depending on your word choice. There wasn't a seat to be had at the meeting as residents concerned with a proposed rail trail filled Proctor Elementary's library. Those leading the charge to build the passive recreational trail submitted a 16-page response to local criticism of the plan. Afterwards, those in the crowd began peppering selectmen with comments and questions. After a few minutes of rumblings, musings and questions, selectmen reminded the audience that the matter wasn't up for debate that evening. That prompted one woman to ask why she and others were there. Selectman Boyd Jackson quickly retorted that he didn't know either.

This issue is surely going to cause a boatload of hard feelings, not only for abutters of the proposed rail trail but for elected officials as well. As residents on both sides of the issue express their opinions in the months to come, here's something to consider: Don't lose perspective.

Monday's selectmen's meeting featured a proposal to build a 24-unit development off Wildes Road. A development that size will place additional pressure on the town's infrastructure and Police and Fire departments. Virtually no one showed up for that meeting. But last week's meeting drew an estimated 40 to 50 people to discuss the rail trail, which it could be argued will have a far lesser impact than the housing development.

Those who are concerned about the rail trail's impact have made valid arguments that will be addressed in due course. It makes sense for Topsfield residents not to get carried away when expressing their emotions. We're not talking about a strip mall, or a strip club. We're talking about a rail trail, a worthy endeavor proposed by people who care about making Topsfield a better