

OPINION

Yes for a new school and skyline

The upcoming Special Town Meeting, commencing on March 14, means a lot of things to a lot of people, but for everyone living in and, particularly if paying taxes, the biggest motivation should be self interest which, let's face it, is most everyone's primary concern.

A group of Residents, employees and public officials are seeking TM's blessing for funding to build a replacement for the Coakley Middle School. The total cost for the project is \$150 million of which \$46 million will be paid by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). The MSBA recently unanimously voted to approve the project, and if TM endorses the article the only obstacle left will be at the ballot box on April. 4.

Some have argued that not enough actual cost based/benefit analysis has been conducted to justify taxpayers getting whacked once again in support of a better Norwood. And an argument could be made that a detailed analysis of the dollars and cents, as was produced prior to the new high school being approved, is justification enough for denying the endorsement. This newspaper doesn't agree.

First and foremost, almost a third of the project is being picked up by the state, and that should alone mitigate, at least to a certain degree, the queasiness of some to spend the money. If someone was to offer to pay a third of your house purchase, no strings attached, how many would say 'no thanks, I really need more time to do my due diligence.'? When opportunity knocks, you jump. And it's not like the decision to build new was made in a vacuum. Plenty of very smart people over the last few years have determined this is the right direction to take, and we agree. This vote will only promote property values, so TM endorsing the money is a no-brainer and should pass unanimously.

TM will also have to decide whether or not to approve a request from the Norwood Planning Board, Moderna and its landlord to turn the old Polaroid Campus off of Route 1A near the Westwood border into a biotech hub. What this does, if approved, is allow for Moderna to build its new 80-foot logistics center and possibly more very tall buildings (up to 100') in the future. And though it pains us to admit it, this newspaper feels the approval should be granted.

Substantial arguments can be made to deny the approval, but the overriding motivation for residents is the tax benefits (yes, even though there will probably be TIFs granted) and the fact that huge multi-unit rental buildings is probably the alternative. It would be wonderful if that land could stay untouched and appreciated for the open space it currently provides, but the reality is that land is just too valuable for profiteers to let that happen. It really is the better of awful choices.

Norwood is already fighting the perception that it is more a city than a suburb and the last thing it needs is more housing monoliths. There is also a certain degree of panache to having one of the leading biotechnology firms in the world located here. Yes, the skyline will most likely change, but some satisfaction should be garnered from the fact that because the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, the shadows cast will probably bother Westwood residents more than Norwood's. I mean come on, that alone should lessen the pain!

Norwood Record

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Skating Club made it a special event

To The Skating Club of Boston:

The Norwood 150th Committee, and especially the Skating Event subcommittee, would like to take this opportunity to thank The Skating Club of Boston for a truly memorable evening.

When we walked into the Club Saturday afternoon for rehearsal we were blown away by the professional production team you had waiting for us. It looked like Mission Control! Everything from the lighting, the sound system, and graphics was far beyond what we expected. We deeply appreciate all the people at The Skating Club of Boston for all their hard work, extra effort, as well as their time. Many thanks also to all of the skaters who volunteered their time to showcase their extraordinary talents that evening for the people of Norwood.

The Skating Club went above and beyond such as having parking lot attendants so our volunteers wouldn't have to be out in the cold, providing pizzas for the volunteers, getting chairs for our seniors who needed them, creating and publishing a first-class program for spectators, skaters signing autographs after the event, hosting a reception so the 1972 hockey team could gather and re-connect and allowing us to recognize them in a ceremony during the event. These may seem like little things to some, but to us they were huge and greatly appreciated.

Many people from the community spoke to our committee members during and after the event and all had the reaction "WOW, we never knew The Boston Skating Club's new home on University Ave. was such an incredible facility or knew the incredible talent who train there."

We think the community got a chance to see what the committee has known since we first started this journey together over a year ago. We believe The Skating Club of Boston and the Norwood community make a great team and will continue to grow in the future. As a primary home

for figure skating, you have embraced Norwood High School Hockey and its history and have dedicated a rink for it. You have embraced the Norwood community by allowing Norwood High School students to usher at your events and the NHS Madrigal's choir singing at several events. A great bond with Jack Tolman and the staff at Norwood Community Media TV has been formed and hopefully this is only the start of a great relationship.

The one constant throughout the year-long planning process was that the committee all agreed that working with The Skating Club of Boston has been one of the most pleasurable experiences in our volunteering lives. The cooperation, generosity, hospitality and support the Club has given us made for an incredible "150th Celebration On Ice"!

Norwood 150th Committee

Not a city in the suburbs

To the Editor:

Special Town Meeting will be held next week and many important Articles on the Warrant will be discussed. One of great importance will be Article 2, to amend the Zoning Bylaw and insert a new Zoning District entitled: Life Sciences Development District. Please note the word Development. This has such significance because of the profound effects it will have on the TOWN OF NORWOOD.

The Districts in Norwood are divided into 3 classes: Residential, Businesses, and Industrial. Each class indicates various uses that include but are not limited to Single or Multifamily residences, Central Business, the Boston Providence Highway Mixed Use, and now the Life Sciences Development District (LSDD). The Table of Dimensional Requirements for LSDD lists, among other things, the Maximum Building Height to be 80 feet. However, there are caveats, and Footnote 20 states: "Increase by one foot for each foot by which all setback and yard requirements are exceeded, to a Maximum of 100 feet in height" with the required ap-

proval of the Planning Board and the FAA (Norwood Airport) (emphasis added).

The maximum building height for the Boston Providence Mixed Use Overlay District is 60 feet. Now, with this LSDD, the applicant, Alexandria Real Estate Equities (who leases it to Moderna) wants to change the maximum height to 80 feet for some buildings, and 100 feet for another with a Special Permit from the Planning Board. Planned for one building now, but how many in future?

The Planning Board approves practically everything that comes before it by promoting the interests of applicants and fails to notice what could be adverse effects on the community and its residents. There was no dissent by the Planning Board with this request, not one, so as expected the Planning Board gave unanimous approval to the height requests.

Forbes Hill is already the highest hill in Town. An 80 foot or 100 foot tall building will change the airspace and skyline on Upland Road and Norwood forever. Residents will resent seeing Moderna's skyscrapers as they ride by one of the last woods in Town.

William Cameron Forbes willed the property to the Town in the 1960s. The Town rejected it. Then Harvard, Forbes's alma mater, and a contractor offered it to the Town and again, rejected. Then came Polaroid, Putnam Investments, Universal Technology Institute (UTI), Mercer, now all out of business. The Town bought and sold it to Alexandria. So how long do you think Moderna will be in business? No one knows. But if it is not long term, the Town of Norwood will be left with several empty buildings with maximum heights of 80 and 100 feet. Kindly note Moderna was approved for underground storage of chemicals, and recently got a Tax Incentive Finance Agreement.

"Economic development" already is having negative effects on our Town with "unintended consequences" over those who live here. Who are we as a Town if Town Officials are not the caretakers and guardians of constituents? A changed skyline, deforestation of trees, large high-density apartment complexes, open lot storage for unregistered vehicles are not in the best interests of our Town.

The TOWN OF NORWOOD is not a "city in the suburbs." It has Represent-

Letters

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Tell 'em
what you
think with a
Letter To
The Editor



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