

Can a community shun its workers?

Amagansett should defy the East End paradox of laborers who can't live locally



lane.filler@newsday.com

Headed out east to Amagansett on a sunny afternoon, it's easy to understand the feelings of local residents who oppose building 40 units of workforce housing. You leave the Long Island Expressway for Montauk Highway, which begins to narrow and quiet. The scenery softens, and as tensions lift and senses revel, you think, "This oasis of nature and sanity so close to the madness due west must be preserved."

Then you notice the traffic heading west at 5:30 p.m. on a workday in Water Mill or Southampton. It is much heavier than the eastbound traffic. And it is truck after truck of construction guys and pool guys and yard guys headed west to places they can afford.

Development has to be controlled, and those who caution against it are not quite the same

as central Island residents protesting another 50 cars on the Jericho Turnpike, but there has to be a place in the wonderful East End for workers who help make it so wonderful.

The East Hampton Housing Authority wants to build four studio apartments attached to small commercial suites and 12 each of one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments. The land, 4.7 acres on Montauk Highway, was bought for about \$4 million. The rents would range from \$1,100 for a studio to \$2,300 for a three-bedroom. Tenants would have incomes ranging from 30 percent of the area's median income, which is \$106,000 for a family of four, to 120 percent.

Preference would go to people who live in the Town of East Hampton or, and this is important, work there full time.

At a meeting Monday night, more than 200 locals heard details about the \$18 million plan from authority Executive Director Catherine Casey. She described a very green development, with its own wastewater treatment, and solar panels and



A 4.7-acre property in Amagansett where 40 units of workforce housing would be built by the East Hampton Housing Authority.

energy conservation that make it largely self-powering. None of the 15 buildings would exceed two stories, nor would they be crowded together. Casey estimates 96 people would live in the 40 units, 37 of them school age.

The Amagansett School District estimates that adding 36 kids would take the local school taxes on a \$1.015 million home from \$1,870 a year to \$2,008. The district has 172 children and sends the middle and high schoolers to East Hamp-

ton schools. Enrollment is projected to decline by about 30 percent in the next 10 years, and the district spends more than \$60,000 per student, largely due to a 5-1 student-teacher ratio for the Amagansett School's 103 kids.

Opponents of the plan said they want to protect the aquifer, prevent traffic and preserve the Amagansett way of life. But Amagansett native and East Hampton Town Supervisor Larry Cantwell painted a kinder picture when he recalled the hamlet

of his youth, where poor workers for the Smith Meal fish factory were welcome and able to live in the community.

The preferred tenants would be workers and residents who are already using the aquifer and who might jam roads less if they could live closer. There's nothing very dense about this plan. It does not, regardless of a local's rant, bring Queens to mind.

The most honest opposition came from Hank Muchnic, running unopposed for Amagansett school board. He sheepishly said, "I'm probably guilty of a really bad case of NIMBY."

Well, sure. It's a great backyard, but a large part of why it's great is the tradesmen and clerks and servers who make it so. Cantwell says business owners complain that workers can't afford to live near enough and traffic is too heavy to live farther out, so it's harder and harder to hire.

For a way of life to be worth preserving, it must nurture everyone necessary to its success. Otherwise it's just land and some water, however pretty, not a beautiful community.

Lane Filler is a member of Newsday's editorial board.



Oyster Bay Supervisor John Venditto will serve on a task force to address the lowering of the town's credit rating to junk status.

tatives contributed to the town's financial mess ["Familiar names on task force," News, April 29].

An impartial, apolitical committee is better suited to recommend how to improve Oyster Bay's financial condition. After the report is delivered, Venditto and the town board should be responsible for using the report, along with public input, to im-

prove Oyster Bay's finances.

Allan Stern
Glen Head

Town Supervisor John Venditto said he was embarrassed about Oyster Bay's dismal financial position ["Venditto on bond embarrassment," News column, May 1]. The column stated that the town is very

wealthy. Here lies the problem.

Town officials' real thought process is that no matter what kind of blunders leaders make, the town's people will bail them out. So what if taxes have to be raised?

Guess what? Some of us are struggling. We cannot afford any more blunders. Start running a tight ship. Get rid of the waste.

Bob Haber
Syosset

Set Suffolk's bar high to protect water

The April 29 editorial addressing Suffolk County's water plan highlighted important issues ["Water plan has holes to plug"] — namely, details about transparency and the vetting process.

Suffolk's cesspools have contaminated our region's drinking and surface waters. If we're going to restore our waters, then we have to pay for it.



@squarelyrooted
Taylor Swift could be lightsaber-dueling with Beyoncé in the LIRR concourse, and literally nobody would even pause en

route to their train.

@izzkhalifaa
Really wish I were in Greenport right now. #withdrawals

@Cyn_City69
I think when Tampa accepts its students, it makes sure that 75% of all the applicants are from Long Island.

While I support County Executive Steve Bellone's initiative to fund and fix, my support is qualified.

Bellone's prescription is additional sewerage and the broad installation of alternative treatment systems. Both are appropriate, provided they have scientific validation and high performance standards. The bar for nutrient removal must be set high; half-measures won't save our waters.

And, let's not overlook agriculture, golf courses and resi-

dential trophy lawns when trying to roll back nitrogen loading. Suffolk County must think big and act boldly.

Kevin McAllister
Amagansett

Editor's note: The writer is the founding president of Defend H2O, a nonprofit advocacy organization.

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