

**OPINION**

# **EDITORIAL: ENOUGH IS ENOUGH**

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BY DAILY ITEM STAFF | June 15, 2018

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Why does every new, bold idea aimed at giving Lynn a chance to be as progressive and prosperous as any other city in Massachusetts get shot down by self-appointed affordable housing advocates?

The developer of a 10-story, 189-apartment building proposed for Munroe Street attempted to explain the benefits of his project at a community meeting Wednesday night only to be shouted down by a collection of grandstanding, self-absorbed protesters.

When Economic Development & Industrial Corporation (EDIC/LYNN) Executive Director James M. Cowdell explained that Procopio Enterprises Inc.'s plan will generate almost \$1 million in property tax revenue once the housing is built, the rabble-rousers clamored to keep a vegetable garden now generating \$3,000 annually in taxes.

When respected veteran real estate agent Eileen Jonah said " ...no city is more affordable than Lynn on the North Shore," the naysayers groaned in protest.

What is the problem with these people? To ask the question another way, what is the problem with Lynn having a shot at success? Did it ever occur to any of the protesters that more tax dollars generated by new construction in Lynn and more people spending their income in Lynn translates into more opportunities — including the chance to build more housing everyone can afford?

Enough is enough with the short-sighted, knee-jerk, damn-the-establishment rhetoric serving no constructive value.

How about a brief review of the facts? Respected housing consultant RKG in a 2016 report listed 8,200 “affordable” housing units in Lynn or 23 percent of all housing in the city. Affordable housing percentages in surrounding communities? Saugus — 7 percent; Peabody — 9.2 percent. Swampscott — 3.7 percent.

Munroe Street project opponents raised the specter of Lynn residents facing displacement. Displacement from where — a vegetable patch across from Land of a Thousand Hills Coffee? Again, the facts show a committed local track record to keep Lynn residents living here and to attract new residents — and their incomes.

It is probably impossible to underestimate Lynn Housing Authority & Neighborhood Development’s (LHAND) contribution over more than 20 years to improving housing in Lynn and giving people who live in Lynn a place to live.

Ask Warren and Shepard Street residents how LHAND transformed their formerly-rundown neighborhood. Ask Highlands residents about how LHAND cleaned up Herbert Street with new housing. Ask Sagamore Hill residents about the new Gateway Residences which, by the way, will have 53 out of 71 units listed as, you guessed it, affordable.

But never mind all of that. The people who rudely disrupted a valuable community meeting on Wednesday asked Procopio to contribute \$250,000 to affordable housing even after he pointed out that his firm’s Needhams Landing project provided 42 new housing units in the city, almost all of them occupied by Lynn residents.

Faced with a disruptive, self-absorbed audience, Cowdell prematurely adjourned Wednesday’s meeting. He may have been better served allowing it to continue so the proponents quietly waiting to lay out their case for why Procopio’s project makes sense could speak their piece — and to give the tone-deaf opponents the chance to further expose the flaws in their argument.

It’s admirable to be passionate and outspoken about a subject. But the people opposed to the Munroe Street project and a much bigger housing project planned for the former Beacon Chevrolet site are blind to logic and obstinate in their opposition.