

Lynn waterfront plan, potential real

A local municipality gets awarded more than \$1 million by the Massachusetts Seaport Advisory Council to make infrastructure improvements along its waterfront, for which it has a vision of increased use in the near future. The news is understandably met with gratitude and widespread approval, including from the local daily newspaper, which editorializes that the waterfront improvements could make the harbor the bustling place it was more than 200 years ago.

Welcome to Salem.

Of course, a very similar set of circumstances took place at the same time here in Lynn, right up to the point where the newspaper came in. Here, we were admonished to "tone down the cheers and misty-eyed rants about the waterfront" (*'Enough with the Lynn waterfront rhetoric'* - Oct. 15 Daily Item).

While giving (Item Editorial Page Editor) Sean Leonard the respect that he is due and celebrating his right to voice an opinion on the subject, the timing of his column is odd at best, considering that for the first time in a half-century there is tangible evidence that the City is serious about taking advantage of 150 acres of oceanfront land.

No longer are we talking about moving the power lines to the other side of the Lynnway; they have been moved, eliminating the single biggest obstacle to meaningful waterfront redevelopment. And the fact that the state has now invested more than \$2 million in a commuter ferry that will run from Lynn to Boston is further proof that the city's plan for the waterfront is being taken seriously.

I don't think anyone involved in the waterfront planning process envisions a duplication of Quincy's



GUEST COMMENTARY /

James M. Cowdell

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wildly successful Marina Bay complex, especially considering we have one-quarter the amount of acreage with which to work. However, reasonable people could agree that some comparisons could be drawn.

Marina Bay sits on a parcel that formerly housed the Naval Air Station Squantum, which closed in 1954. The land was sold at auction in 1956 and sat vacant for more than 30 years. The redevelopment started in 1985, with construction proceeding in several phases, until the recess-

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sion of the early 1990s temporarily halted the project. By 2000, there were 1,300 people living in the five residential complexes — which are now joined by 10 restaurants, office complexes, a 685-slip marina and seven shops and services.

The Boston Redevelopment Authority recently approved the Seaport Square project, which will transform land on the South Boston waterfront that is now used mostly for parking lots into a new, 20-block neighborhood with 6.3 million square feet of floor space, making it the single biggest development in the city's history. The development will include condominiums and apartments, two hotels, restaurants and shops, office buildings, a performing arts center and public parks — all on only 23 acres.

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Leonard's column justifiably credits Sen. Tom McGee and the rest of the state delegation for sticking with the commuter ferry project, even when the federal government refused to provide stimulus funding for it. The \$1.3 million recently awarded the City by the Seaport Advisory Council will be used to complete the second of three phases on this project that we hope to have completed by 2012.

Part of the definition of rhetoric is the "undue use of exaggeration." Perhaps that may have been the case in the past when discussing plans for the Lynn waterfront.

Times have changed.

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