

The Falmouth Enterprise

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Devoted To The Interests Of The Falmouth Community

Old World Thinking

Michael Galasso's plan to convert the former nursing home on East Main Street into housing is a good one. Mr. Galasso proposes to create 26 year-round apartments, most of them studios, and 45 rooms that would be rented on a monthly basis. At least 25 percent of the units would be rented to tenants earning less than 80 percent of the area median income.

There would be a community kitchen for the tenants of the single rooms, co-working spaces, a gym and an outdoor plaza facing Main Street. There would be a café in the building as well.

It is an ideal living arrangement for workers, both seasonal and year-round.

The planning board, the Falmouth Village Association and the chamber of commerce, among others, support the project.

The appeals board, on the other hand, does not. The appeals board thinks there are not enough parking spaces because the plans call for 71 units and only 59 parking spaces. One member called it a "parking nightmare." Another said he was "struggling with the math." They said Mr. Galasso should either find off-site parking, which he has, in fact, attempted to do, or reduce the number of units.

The appeals board is out of step with the world.

It makes sense on the face of it; build a public facility and there needs to be accommodations for the public to park. But it's time to realize that parking is not the problem; cars are the problem.

And they have been for a long time. Fifty years ago, the town discussed with Russell Palmer, who ran Falmouth's bus line, the idea of an intermunicipal bus route. It didn't go anywhere. More recently the town created a traffic management committee. In fact, traffic—cars—is a problem all over the Cape.

Mr. Galasso has a solution. His East Main Street development will provide ride-share cars on site. There will be shared electric bikes. A van will be made available to drive tenants to work.

Instead of agitating about the lack of parking, the appeals board should embrace Mr. Galasso's plan. It has the makings of a prototype for alternative transportation. It would be a visible example of how transportation can work without cars.

That is the new world, and that is the world the appeals board should be imagining, not the old one in which everyone drives a car.