

Letter: NAID Interested in Development, Not Environment

To the editor:

It is amazing reviewing The Daily News editorial of March 18, "Focusing on Port's economic development," and reading the award this paper has recently received.

When the editorial writer wrote the statement, "but the effort (referring to NAID's development) is being vociferously opposed by environmentalists," the person wrote with little knowledge or an unbalanced pen. The Newburyport Strategic Land Use Committee (SLUC) opened all areas for discussion for 18 months regarding development and the environment. Mr. Gerrish (whom your article refers to) was the NAID representative to the SLU. However, Mr. Gerrish only considered the SLUC important enough to attend three of its meetings and sent another person for 95 percent of the committee process. One of the more memorable contributions to the SLUC by NAID was Mr. Gerrish's remark: I remember how wonderful it was years ago, everyone was leaving town and there was plenty of open space.

The result of 18 months of the SLUC did produce a balanced objective for all representatives at the table. To preserve the wetlands areas north of Hale Street, several considerations were presented by the committee. An overlay zoning district could be incorporated that would allow increased height and density of the existing industrial area. A similar overlay district for the Route 1 traffic circle area was presented, that would encourage business development. Also the wetlands areas north of Hale Street could also be preserved by transfer of development rights. These SLUC recommendations would increase jobs and add to the city's tax roll and protect the environment at the same time. Unfortunately, I perceived the feeling that NAID never considered any of these options; only to build. To avoid unnecessary NAID ill press, the Kane Company is now the possible developer in place of NAID.

Your editorial mentioned the idea of some development of the NAID land and leaving the remaining as open space. If the wetlands, head waters of the Little River, endangered habitat and species area is fragmented, all is lost. Also, birdwatching was never one of the issues that I recall; it was the endangered spotted turtle, other species, wetlands and riparian corridors that were of concern. The NAID reduction for development north of Hale Street was more of the environmental laws than the concern of NAID to protect the area. Example of this, the existing industrial area sits on a large percent of filled-in wetlands which would never meet the muster today.

For many years I have read in this paper a one-dimension approach of the issues involving NAID. NAID helped the Newburyport area in the lean years. However, destroying the environment north of Hale Street is not a plus for the community or NAID.

ALBERT G. DECIE II

Newburyport