



Dartmouth Common anger

Dartmouth residents at a recent city planning session were unified in their opposition to the imminent expansion of Metro Transit's bridge terminal into an adjacent wilderness area.

by Tim Bousquet

About 100 Dartmouth residents who came to a city planning session Monday night appeared unified in their position: They have no love whatsoever for the imminent expansion of Metro Transit's bridge terminal into an adjacent wilderness area.

Residents charge that Common land has through the years been improperly sold to private developers and eaten away at by questionable operations like the Sportsplex, which is nominally open to the public but has a large membership fee. The terminal expansion, say residents, is more of the same, an attack on what should be inviolable green space.

The "public input" meeting was the second of two called by engineering firm CBCL, which is contracted to write a 20-year plan for the Dartmouth Common. In general, the residents seemed pleased that, bus terminal aside, CBCL had responded positively to their input from the first meeting.

CBCL's proposed plan for the Common includes an outdoor skating rink, an amphitheatre and more trails along the waterfront, and calls for the city to buy the McDonald's on Nantucket Avenue and turn the ground beneath it back to park land. That plan will go to city council for approval sometime next year, said CBCL's Gordon Smith.

As originally planned, the new bus terminal would have stretched up Nantucket to within just a few metres of Dartmouth High School. The revised plan, however, orients the terminal perpendicular to Nantucket, stretching through the wilderness area to Thistle Street.

Smith himself is pained by the terminal plan, but said the expansion plan was demanded by city council. "That train has left the station," he said.

"It's a huge thing we're giving up, and it requires great enumeration," said resident Jean Llewellyn, who noted that the Common plan comes with no dedicated funding to achieve any of its lofty goals.

Work on the bus terminal, however, will commence almost immediately, in time for use by next summer. [Disclosure: I live very close to the Dartmouth Common.] —Tim Bousquet



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