

January 10 2005

Robert McIntire, Chairman
Old Saybrook Planning Commission
Old Saybrook CT

**PLANNING
COMMISSION
EXHIBIT #165**

Dear Chairman McIntire;

As you know, I have been an integral part of The Preserve's planning team and have testified on their behalf in past public hearings. I was prepared to do the same last week had the hearing not been cancelled. Unfortunately I am in Texas the night of the postponed hearing and cannot add my comments in person; I am therefore sending a letter to provide my comments, comparing our carefully planned and engineered proposal for an Open Space Plan to the just-received 'alternative plan,' prepared by CFE and its consultants over the last week since the postponed hearing.


Obviously one major difference is that CFE and its consultants have not had the benefit of the time, resources, and energy which we were able to expend in balancing all of the complex considerations that go into a well designed development plan. They could have, however, had the benefit of the results of that work, which have been provided as part of the record of this submission.

I say 'could have', because it is particularly surprising that they did not take advantage of some of that base work and those conclusions in attempting to present a feasible and prudent alternative. Because they did not, their proposal is not realistically feasible nor prudent.

- For example, it is not feasible because they have not taken into account many of the environmental, planning and engineering concerns which drove our plan: from the prioritization of environmental features (for instance, their plan impacts key vernal pools that we carefully isolated and avoided), to public benefits such as the Town-encouraged provision of a spine road (which will not only connect disparate parts of the community, but also provide a much needed regional water main link).
- Furthermore, their alternative is not prudent because in using, as their sole criterion, the environmental preservation of the maximum site area, they have ignored the fact that if development is economically impossible, no meaningful preservation, nor any associated public benefits, can occur. Obviously from only the environmental point of view, the way to maximize unfragmented open space is to minimize development density and associated services and amenities. The other side of the equation is that without this density and those services and amenities— a unique approach to residential mix, a state-of-the-art golf course, a sophisticated community utility system -- the development cannot be marketed and built.

Best practices in planning for public-private development are an art as well as a science. Our approach at The Preserve blends feasibility and prudence in a practical way which both pushes the envelope in the direction of public benefit—for the environment as well as the local community -- but also takes cognizance of real-world parameters: the rights of the property owner, the needs of the local housing market, the potential for the local economy. The Preserve's planning team has achieved this with its proposed plan, but the proposed alternative fails by not even trying to acknowledge, not to say reach, such challenging goals.

Sincerely,


Randall Arendt, FRTPI, ASLA (Hon.)