

There has been a rash of senseless acts lately on Nantucket. Acts that will change the face of this island, perhaps forever. And, frankly, I find it a little bit scary. And shocking. And somewhat incomprehensible.



Grant Sanders

YACK on: Philanthropic Lone Rangers

I speak, of course, about the sudden outbreak of wanton philanthropy on this island. (And my voice quavers slightly in fearful apprehension as I do so.)

First, our local Planning Board, duly and rightfully elected by the people of this island, decided they wanted to see Eel Point Road paved. Some sissy whiners and malcontents were against the idea, but that made no difference.

The Planning Board was dead set against the notion of leaving Eel Point Road alone, even after a number of people spoke out against it in public. The hot-mix screed had been revved up and it looked like Eel Point road was going to be a lovely ribbon of bituminous carcinogens when suddenly, and without warning, some anonymous person wrote a check for over \$26 million dollars, bought the land to be developed near 40th pole and took away the Planning Board's reason for paving the road. Personally I was shocked that someone with that much money would purchase that amount of land and just sit on it to keep a piece of untouched dune from being developed and stop a road from being paved. I mean, who does that? It flies in the face of what has made this island what it is today — an overbuilt playground for the shallow and self-centered fueled by greedy developers.

Next, the people of Nantucket voted in a special town meeting this July (some might have called it “a very special town meeting”) to either leave the Dreamland Theatre as an empty lifeless shell or create a public and private partnership to save the historic structure, fix it up and get a movie theater run-

ning again. Thank goodness cooler and more rational heads prevailed and the town voted, by a rather narrow margin, to let the old building rot and to allow this festering sore to continue to infect and poison the downtown commercial district. I mean, who needs the headaches of fixing up an old building, anyway? But then, just like on Eel Point Road, some rather wealthy summer residents stepped in and announced their plans to go against the wishes of the local community. They formed a non-profit foundation and bought the theater from the previous owner for nearly \$10 million and now they are working to turn it into a theater again. And just a theater! No condos, no restaurants, no hoity-toity retail, no t-shirt shops! (It's clear to me that these philanthropic lone rangers have no idea what Nantucket is all about. I mean, how can you buy a building downtown and not fill it full of gaudy money-making ventures and t-shirt shops? It's just not Nantuckety.)

And then there was the act that made my blood run cold. The town went to the polls and voted overwhelmingly to not fund a new transportation hub downtown. Then, in steps a wealthy couple who make their money through some crazy Internet scheme (I'm suspicious of this whole world wide Web thing. It will never catch on in my opinion). And what do they do? They bring in their own foundation dedicated to the idea of sustainable green transportation and they buy the land that the town rejected and announce they plan to create a transportation hub for the town — for free — and then support a transition to a greener transportation system on the island. Don't they know that Nantucket would not be Nantucket without traffic jams? Without a 10-minute wait at the stop sign near the high school? Without driving in endless circles around the old historic district in the middle of August looking for a parking space? This is just insanity. Consider that even in the summer, when the island has 50,000 people on it, the NRTA only has 3,000 riders per day. That means that 94 percent of the island isn't even using the NRTA.

So why in the heck would anyone want to make it better?

My friend and fellow columnist, Dan Drake, posed an interesting question in his column last week: “Who runs Nantucket?” Well here's your answer, Dan. It's anyone with a big pile of cash or the ability to form, fund and run a nonprofit foundation. That's who runs this place.

It's obviously not the people of Nantucket who have shown that they want a paved Eel Point Road, that they don't want the Dreamland fixed up and they don't want an improved transportation system.

Of course, we can use this crazy philanthropy trend to our advantage. Which is why I will be sponsoring three initiatives at the upcoming Annual Town Meeting. One, to cut funding to the entire sewer system. Another to end any money spent on the Fairgrounds Road Public Safety Complex. And, a third to gut any spending to improve Our Island Home. If we vote them down resoundingly at Town Meeting, by summertime our wealthy summer neighbors will be falling all over themselves to form nonprofit foundations that they can use to fund the sewers, the Public Safety Complex and our town-run elder facilities.

Heck, I might even sponsor a warrant article to defeat any funding of a complete kitchen renovation in the home of Grant Sanders. My wife and I might be able to get a nice Viking range out of the deal.

YACK on. ■

Grant Sanders is the Host of YACK, The Nantucket Online Community at yackon.com and he has nothing against wealthy people. He would like very much to be one someday. His views are obviously the product of his own very warped brain and do not necessarily reflect the editorial stance of The Nantucket Independent. Or his wife. Although the Viking Range does sound tempting.

HUB

Continued from page 1

While the selectmen had proposed having the town buy the property for the same amount, it would have required a \$2.5 million override that voters shot down in September. Worden said he knew of the Foundation's mission to improve the global environment and energy practices as well as protect historic places using new, clean technologies. The night the ballot question failed, Worden phoned the Schmidts and explained the situation.

“They responded literally in one phone call,” said Worden. “They said this is important to Nantucket. The reason the decision was so easy is because it was directly in line with their mission. We are at the point of taking a very good idea of the town's and bringing additional expertise to it and developing it in ways that are good for the town.”

The Foundation's President is Wendy Schmidt whose husband Eric Schmidt is Google's Chief

Executive Officer. They fund the Foundation. The Schmidts are summer residents of the island and keep up with what is occurring here with an eye to assisting through the California-based nonprofit organization.

“Municipalities and governments are strapped for these services,” said Vorce. “This is an exciting opportunity and I appreciate the fact that they are making this available to the town. I think there is an opportunity here to improve the transit system and attract ridership. I want to make our staff resources available [to work on the design].”

Vorce said some of the topics discussed on Sunday included what will be done with the existing liquor store building, what the new building should look like, where it should be located and whether it should include public restrooms, an information kiosk and a retail area for beverages. Preliminary landscaping ideas and the potential to include shade on the property were also discussed, but whether the hub will be gifted or leased to the town or NRTA has yet to be determined.

Worden, also co-owner of Windwalker Real Estate on Nantucket, said talks about the project layout have begun and will continue with the selectmen and NRTA Administrator Paula Leary, and will include important feedback from shuttle bus drivers next summer. He said the hope is to have the property used as a prototype on a temporary basis in the summer of 2008 and begin its transformation to a final design in the fall. Worden's resort investment and development company is also committed to sustainable development practices and “green” technologies, so he is pleased to be involved with the Foundations' goals.

“We want this to be a national model for green development and sustainability,” he said of the hub. “We'd like to advance the concept of green buses. Nantucket is vulnerable in certain ways and this is an opportunity to advance thinking on what green technology and sustainability is. To be part of that team is very exciting.” ■

PACIFIC CLUB

Continued from page 1

“Over time, some cracks have appeared and some of them are the result of some older repairs that have caused a problem and some of them are just age,” said Andrews. “It's an old building, so I guess every two or three hundred years you have to do a little maintenance.”

Part of the problem is the Portland Cement, said Andrews, used to repair the building in the past that is known to be porous when it hardens, allowing water to seep in, freeze and crack the bricks.

Also, iron in the walls used during the original construction of the building is rusting and expanding, and as it does, causing cracks in bricks.

“There seems to be some places where iron has expanded and caused cracks, so they're repairing that [too],” said Andrews. “It was a brick shell after the Great Fire 1846, so another building was constructed

inside that, so they seem to have left some of the stuff from the previous structure.

“They're basically just artifacts from 1772 that are just now getting around to causing some problems.”

Most of the work is being done on the south and west sides of the building, as Andrews said that Irons had already completed extensive repairs to the north and east walls of the Pacific Club over the years. Working with limited means from the leases of the building's spaces to the club's tenants and Irons' frenetic schedule, Andrews gets him when he can and he chips away at the project in between other jobs on the island.

Built in 1772, the Pacific Club building was originally known as the William Rotch Warehouse after whaling company owner and candle maker William Rotch who was one of the first candle makers on Nantucket and also used the building for a base of operations for his four whalers: the Beaver, the Bedford, the Dartmouth and the Eleanor. His whaling

captains also played cribbage in the Rotch Warehouse.

Pacific Club members have keys to club that they use to access its part of the building to hang out, play cribbage and use its bathroom. Ironically, Andrews inherited one of the club's 24 shares from her late father Clinton Andrews who got his from one of the original, founding shareholders, Clinton Parker, and is president by default because she lives on island year-round.

In charge of the club itself, but not the cribbage club, a subset within the club membership and probably outside of it as well, Andrews' work is more preservation of the structure and its historical aspects.

“We're just maintaining what we have and trying to do it in an appropriate and sensitive way,” Andrews said, adding that she hopes the necessary building maintenance work does not inconvenience anyone. ■