

10/5
Baron

EDITORIAL

Welcome to town

Yin and Creighton Peet are one step closer to seeing their dream for the quarry in North Acton realized. It's been a lengthy — and at times bitter — process for the Peets. But if the proposal for their 13-acre property — which includes a sculpture park, artist studio and two residences — meets local regulations, the Board of Selectmen should support the plan and welcome the Peets to Acton.

The Peets purchased the land in 2003 and have been hoping to build there ever since. But their plan to swap land with the town was defeated at a Town Meeting in 2004. It was a deal that most agree was unnecessarily complex — and, as it is clear today, unnecessary altogether. The Peets always had the right to build a driveway from Quarry Road.

What was most discouraging was the way in which the Peets were treated along the way. Some residents responded with a “not in my back yard” mentality, the result of concerns that Yin Peet's sculpture, which can be provocative — some would say obscene — would lower property values and be a blemish on North Acton.

But isn't the most important art provocative? What's risqué today may be standard tomorrow. And artists deserve the freedom to recreate the world in any way they see fit.

Perhaps the project will have the opposite effect and make the neighborhood a more diverse and desirable place to own property. Certainly, the Wayland residents will have the chance to clean up and monitor what has become an unsupervised eyesore, a party haven for youth. Some longtime residents — who remember the days when swimming in the quarry was a remote slice of New England life — are happy to have the Peets as neighbors.

Some see only upsides for the 68 Quarry Road land — a possible smaller version of nearby Lincoln's sculpture park, DeCordova. Embracing the Peet property shows that Acton is a community that invites culture, ideas and art — that the town is not just a cookie-cutter, one-size fits all mentality.

The bottom line: The Peets own the land and have a right to develop it. They have a right for driveway access. They have a right to invite student artists to learn there. They have a right to live there with their family. And, because of the First Amendment, they have a right to display the kind of art they choose. Yin and Creighton Peet are here to be responsible neighbors. And we should do what we can to make up for any ill will sent their way to this point by inviting them to be part of the community.