

'A Sensible View on Watauga County Property Rights' : A Republican point of view

Written by
Friday, 27 July 2007 07:38

The following passages express the opinions of two area Republicans. They do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of Aisling Broadcasting. We'll have some direct comments from Hugh Sturgill in our regular news broadcast on Monday. *The following is by Jim Goff, chair of the Watauga County Republican Party.*

For a response from the Watauga County Democratic Party, click [here](#)

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From the beginnings of our republic, property rights have been central to what it means to be and live free. In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson paraphrased the English political philosopher John Locke by taking Locke's right of "Life, Liberty, and Property" and proclaiming that all people had an unalienable right to "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." Pursuing happiness, Jefferson judged, was tantamount to the freedom to pursue, acquire, and use various kind of personal property. As we move toward the upcoming municipal elections, it's important to weigh exactly how these rights are either protected or infringed. This month, Watauga Republican Hugh Sturgill shares some timely and level-headed thoughts on the subject of property rights as they relate to those of us who live and work in the High Country.

The following is by Hugh Sturgill of the Watauga County Republican Party.

Promoting the "General Welfare" means different things to different people. The far left desires a society micro managed and controlled by government. The far right has been trying for years to legislate morality. They are both dead wrong and their influence over candidate selection has produced a record 41% independent national registration. We, unfortunately, are not immune to this extreme philosophical political thinking in our local city government.

When we acquire real estate some of the rights have usually been granted to others. Zoning, utility easements, third party right of way, maintenance agreements and in some cases historical designations or districting will affect your ability to do what you want with your property. The absence of these and other rights that are a pre-existing condition at the time of acquisition are not relevant to this conversation. The property rights that remain with the owner

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and taxpayer exist only to the extent they do not risk the health, safety or welfare of our community. This is my area of great concern.

A. Do we need Engineering Ordinances that are prepared by objective professionals and are written in clear and comprehensive language to remedy health and or safety issues?--ABSOLUTELY B. Do we need a competent Board of Adjustment to fit anomaly situations to a given ordinance? –YES, WE DO C. Does the Boone City Council need to micro-manage these efforts with nebulous language insertions in the drafting process that will require subjective opinions and judgments on a project-by-project basis? -- MOST DEFINITELY NOT!

We are a mountainous area with some extremely steep grades in parts of our county and as one of my former clients said “that land is so steep it’s only use is holding the world together”. For safety reasons a well-written steep slope ordinance would be helpful to all of us including developers. However, the fuzzy document we wound up with is not worth the paper it is written on.

(If you want to read a good one look at Haywood County) As for the View Shed ordinance, the welfare of property owners must not have been an important consideration. The actions of this city council indicate a soft bigotry of low expectation for developers and property owners. 700 of our 9,000 eligible city voters put them in office; maybe we will find 1000 voters to turn them out.

Hugh Sturgill

Media Chairman

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