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Barrows: Community Campus purchase is a great opportunity for Portsmouth

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Published 5:01 a.m. ET Sept. 24, 2021

I've never hesitated to be critical of the Portsmouth City Council in past columns so I won't hesitate to be complimentary when it's deserved. According to the Herald's Jeff McMenemy's September 16th article "'Huge deal': Portsmouth reaches deal to buy Community Campus for $10 million", it's reported that the council has given City Manager Karen Conard the green light to begin negotiations for the purchase of The Community Campus located off of West Road.

I have long believed The Community Campus was a relatively unknown entity of the city. It's been home to some great non-profits over the years, but I'm not certain everyone in the city knew that this important resource even existed. I've utilized the campus's services in the past and often I found myself asking if the facility was being maximized. The location is a gem. It's situated within a 34-acre wood lot, for which we all can agree that that type of real estate opportunity is basically no longer existent within the city's limits. Additionally, the structure is nicely designed and I'm guessing it will pass muster among Portsmouth's 21,000 architects who continue to focus their Frank Lloyd Wright-esque eyes towards the downtown's McIntyre building.

More: 'Huge deal': Portsmouth reaches deal to buy Community Campus for $10 million

There is also tremendous versatility with this property. I'm certain I'll overlook some of the building's interior features but at its core it has offices, classrooms, conference spaces, a basketball court, commercial kitchen and dining area. The exterior has ample parking, wooded trails, athletic fields and courts.

This purchase is an absolute no-brainer and I encourage all city residents to look at this opportunity not by its $10 million price tag, but to look at it as a tax reducing asset for the city. It's not entirely clear what will be housed there, but the possibilities are numerous. Here are just a few options that could relocate to this property. Could it be the new city hall, the new police station, or a new school? Who knows, but the point I'm trying to emphasize here is that with property values and construction costs at all-time highs we are going to look back at this purchase as a bargain. Rather than continuing to put Band-Aids on our current City Hall we can upgrade the space, the parking and the amenities with the acquisition of this property. Additionally, with the current demand for downtown real estate the existing City Hall property could easily be sold for who knows how many millions for those of you who are looking to offset costs.

With all that, let me tip my hat to Mayor Becksted for seizing this opportunity. I've known the mayor for a long time and the guy I know is passionate, hardworking and he cares about our city. He especially cares about the children of our city so it's no surprise to me that he's excited about the prospect of the community campus land and its potential for additional athletic fields. I haven't always agreed with Rick, but I know his true self is a principled city resident who wants what's best for the community. Mayor Becksted is at his best when his passion for a project is not influenced by negative and misguided advice from voices who harbor petty hidden agendas and would rather step over a dollar to pick up a nickel as long as it proves some asinine self absorbing point.

I'm so excited about this opportunity that I thought about buying the domain name www.communitycampusforportsmouth.com, and donating it to the city for free, but I'd bet a Kennedy half dollar someone has beaten me to it.

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