



*"We face an inescapable choice between planning and peril."*  
— Norman Bel Geddes.

I found these words in the Introduction to Chapter 2 of the Narragansett Comprehensive Plan. I was perusing this impressive compendium of my newly adopted hometown's inner workings for two reasons: My insatiable appetite for local history and the fact that I had just returned from a meeting of a new committee at Bonnet Shores – the Long Range Planning Committee.

I should explain that my wife and I are new to Bonnet. We've owned property here for four years and have been full-time residents for somewhat less than two. One of the first things we did back in 1995 was to go to a meeting of the Bonnet Shores Historical Committee, as I had done considerable work with a dedicated (some might say fanatical) group of local historians in my native Woonsocket.

This became a starting point for our meeting many "old time" district residents – old only in terms of their Bonnet experience, for indeed many of them are younger than we are! Sharing delightful memories of times past has been a source of delight for them and has given the two of us a tremendous appreciation for this place. We started going to monthly district council meetings, and so on, all of which eventually put us on the above-mentioned Long Range Planning Committee.

This interesting group of interested residents has held two meetings thus far and certainly has its work cut out for itself. Topics for consideration range from making the community building more accessible to establishing a more effective budgeting and cost accounting process for the district; or from evaluating the condition of the water in Wesquage Pond to conducting a survey of Bonnet residents' interests.

Whether it's organizing bus trips to New York City or gathering volunteers to rebuild the community playground, it is an idea worthy of consideration at these meetings. Amid these sometimes widely unrelated topics, what clearly emerges is the inescapable fact that the fire district has come a long way from its days as a summer colony. Full-time residency has forced us to address new and exciting (to me, anyway) issues of community involvement and participation. Phrases like "quality of life" and "tapping the varied talents of our residents" and "nuts and bolts" regularly pop up in our discussions.

What also emerges is an even greater respect for this area's past. We owe a great deal to those who preceded us and who had a vision for the "sense of place" that pervades this community. To quote from the town's comprehensive plan once again: "People tend to appreciate landscapes which define where they live and make their 'home' or their part of the country special and identifiable from other areas." In looking out for the long range, the district is taking steps to preserve its character – and is enhancing the appreciation of its present. How fortunate my wife and I are to have landed here when we did. All we need now are sweatshirts emblazoned with the words: "OK, so I wasn't born here . . . but I got here as soon as I could!"