

FW: Opposing construction of 136-140 Worcester Street, Wellesley MA

Mahoney, Lenore <lmahoney@wellesleyma.gov>

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To: Richards, Carol <crichards@wellesleyma.gov>

From: Atul Varma [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, May 24, 2020 5:34 PM
To: Mahoney, Lenore <lmahoney@wellesleyma.gov>
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Opposing construction of 136-140 Worcester Street, Wellesley MA

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Lenore - I am writing to express my opposition to proceed forward with the approval to build housing at 136-140 Worcester Street, Wellesley MA.

We have significant concerns about this project as it pertains to:

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- The process the Zoning
- Board of Appeals has followed in continuing with multiple hearings over the last year, without directly notifying abutters.
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- The approach the applicant
- (SEB Wellesley LLC) has taken in moving this application forward.
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- Adverse impact to students
- at PAWS, Fiske elementary and Schofield elementary schools due to capacity issues.
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The developer’s permit application (dated May 24th, 2019) requests a waiver of the notification process and seeks to only provide notification to abutters within 100 feet. However, the record shows that this waiver was never granted by the ZBA, nor should it have been. It is concerning that the applicant believes that the project cannot be successful without the “300 feet abutter” notification waiver. Notifications and hearings are meant precisely to bring all points of view into the process, including abutters and neighbors. 40B

projects have progressed successfully all across Massachusetts with lawful abutter notification and collaboration.

Without any apparent discussion on why abutters are not part of the process, the permit application has gone through multiple so-called “public” hearings with one continuation after another, making a farce of the notion of a public hearing because the “public” that should have been heard has never been comprehensively notified of the 40B permit application and its implications for the community.

Perhaps as a token offering to the neighborhood, two homeowners on Duxbury Road (more than 300 feet from the project) were informed by the town just 5 days prior to the final “public hearing” on March 31, 2020. When they joined the town call line (since the Wellesley School Committee was still in session on the public video channel) to voice their objections to the 40B project, the ZBA’s dismissive response was that the board has had hearings for months, and has already dealt with all the issues.

We respectfully submit that the ZBA has failed in its responsibility to ensure that abutters within 300 feet, and indeed the residents of the neighborhood, were given a fair opportunity, in accordance with Massachusetts and Wellesley laws, to voice their concerns and collaborate with the applicant. This failure invalidates the entire process of the permit application review. The Chairman of the Zoning Board, Robert Levy, himself stated in the last public hearing on March 31st, 2020: “we have had very little public input on these hearings”.

It is even more disconcerting that this site is being seriously considered yet again since the following projects have already been designated for this part of Wellesley.

- - ZBA approval
 - of a 40R project on Williams Rd (350 residential units, 1.6 miles from this project)
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- Mass Housing
- Authority’s redevelopment of Barton Road housing (0.6 mi from this project)
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- ZBA approval
- of a 40B project on 3 Burke Lane (1056 feet from this project!)
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PAWS, Fiske elementary and Schofield elementary schools are bursting at the seams. The Fiske school has a shortage of rooms because PAWS holds after school classes there and does not have enough room itself. The impact on quality of education at these schools will be meaningful to the detriment of current residents.

In my view, the exclusion of neighborhood opinion and engagement invalidates much of what has occurred since the permit application on May 24, 2019. There isn't a single letter posted on the wellesley website (<https://www.wellesleyma.gov/893/Chapter-40B-Development-Projects>) for this project while there are numerous for every other project— a reflection of the fact that abutters have been shut out of this process.

I would request that this and other letters you have received on this matter be posted under the Abutter Letters and Docs section for the public to see.

We support the 40B project concept in general and completely understand the need for subsidized housing in Wellesley. However, as tax paying residents of Wellesley, we are deeply concerned that the town has proceeded to work with a permit applicant on a proposal to build a massive 5 story site in our neighborhood without our input and without notifying us.

Respectfully,
Atul Varma
2 Burnett Lane, Wellesley, MA 02481