

Ref: 8890

October 12, 2021

Zoning Board of Appeals Traffic Working Group
Town of Norwell
345 Main Street
Norwell, Massachusetts 02061

Re: Responses to Comments from Zoning Board of Appeals Traffic Working Group
Proposed Residential Development - 15 High Street
Norwell, Massachusetts

To the Members of the Norwell Zoning Board of Appeals:

Vanasse & Associates, Inc. (VAI) has compiled responses to comments regarding traffic identified by the Traffic Working Group in their memorandum dated September 17, 2021. Some of these comments have already been addressed through responses to the Peer Review and/or the responses to comments from the ZBA meetings of August 4, 2021 and September 9, 2021 contained in VAI's letters of October 7, 2021.

Comment 1: *Request applicant address questions and issues specific to the data and assumptions used in the traffic impact study and COVID-19. Specifically, the following items should be incorporated into the responses:*

- *The information contained in the Route-53 Corridor Study recently completed. The applicant proposal should take into consideration the issues and recommendations. <https://www.ctps.org/data/html/studies/highway/Route-53-Corridor-Norwell-Study/Route-53-Corridor-Norwell-Study.html> [nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com]*

Response: The traffic volume data on Washington Street contained in the initial TIA was provided by CTPS, prior to the completion of their Corridor Study. As such, any adjustments by CTPS to traffic volumes to account for COVID factors were not available; therefore, VAI used standard MassDOT practices of utilizing other area traffic count sources for COVID adjustments. The town's Peer Reviewer concurred with the methodology used by VAI.

Following the submittal of the TIA, the CTPS Corridor Study was finalized and made public. A review of the traffic volume adjustments indicates CTPS adjusted the AM peak hour volumes by "25 to 30 percent" to account for COVID factors but does not provide additional detail on where or how these adjustments were applied. A comparison of the baseline AM and PM peak hour traffic volumes between the CTPS Study and the initial TIA for the Project indicated that the final CTPS AM volumes are 18 percent higher than the TIA AM volumes, but the CTPS PM volumes are 7 percent lower than the TIA PM volumes. In response to the comments from the ZBA meetings, VAI conducted new traffic counts that indicated a 22 percent higher volume on High Street than was recorded in April 2021. Therefore, the AM volumes were increased by 22 percent at the Washington Street intersection with High Street and Grove Street. The revised analysis indicates the intersection under this condition operates with slightly more delay; however, the overall operation is not significantly changed from that presented in the traffic analysis and the

Project impact is still noted to be minimal with queue increases of at most one vehicle to the various movements at the intersection.

- ***Other local traffic studies completed prior to COVID-19. Baseline traffic and speed observations may be unreliable given the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting impact to traffic patterns.***

Response: The Norwell Planning Board was contacted for other local traffic studies completed prior to COVID-19. A review of one traffic study for a project proposed for 120 Washington Street indicated operations at the Washington Street intersection with High Street and Grove Street in 2019 and pre-COVID were better than the more recent data, with LOS B/C predicted for 2019 weekday morning/weekday evening peak hour conditions compared with LOS C/D predicted for the same time periods in 2021.

- ***Comparative observations of entry/exit volume of similar development locally. Estimated traffic impacts as a result of the proposed development may be unreliable given the COVID-19 pandemic and unique characteristics of Norwell.***

Response: Observations of similar developments may be affected by COVID conditions and could lead to reduced estimates of project traffic if more residents are working from home. Shifting of peak hours could also occur, which would lead to less traffic than would be expected under non-COVID conditions. The ITE data is representative of typical non-COVID conditions and is recommended for use in this case.

- ***Stress testing the key traffic report assumptions (Trip Generation rates and volume adjustment rates) to determine "what if" impacts of COVID-19 related changes to traffic patterns.***

Response: There are no guidelines for these types of adjustments. The base condition indicates that the Project has a minimal impact on area traffic volumes and patterns. Increases of various percentages are not likely to change the conclusion that the project has a minimal impact in the area.

Comment 2: ***Driveway/Access Road: The current design is unsafe and may create significant traffic queues heading north on High St. to route 53 and accidents. The applicant should:***

- ***Evaluate alternatives such as making the northern entry one-way, making the entire access road one-way or moving the driveway/access road further away from the route 53 intersection.***

Response: The current design is not unsafe. Adequate sight distance exists for vehicles entering and exiting the northern driveway. Excessive speed is not an issue, based on two sets of speed data. It is unlikely that 9 vehicles turning left out of this driveway over a 60-minute period will create significant traffic queues heading north. A review of crash data at the intersection from the CTPS Corridor Study indicated 1 crash in 5 years for vehicles exiting from the Washington Square Office complex which has approximately three times the



traffic volume and a significantly higher left-turn volume during the evening peak hour than that expected with the Project northern driveway (61 vs 5).

Conversely, making the internal roadway one way increases travel through the development and puts all exiting movements at one location. There is not an opportunity to move the northern driveway further south without impacting the number of residences.

- ***Given queue issues, the northern entry may need to be widened for a potential Fire Truck entry turning radius.***

Response: This will be addressed by the site engineer in upcoming site plans.

- ***Consider more visitor parking, turnarounds and drop off areas away from High Street within the project design to help traffic flow.***

Response: Driveways can be used for short-term drop-off areas. The Urban Land Institute (ULI) indicates 0.10 to 0.15 spaces per unit (approximately 6 to 9 spaces) is an appropriate range of ratios for visitor parking at residential developments. This total is satisfied by the Project, which proposes approximately 10 visitor parking spaces.

Comment 4: ***The applicant should work with CVS and the abutting property owner to redesign pedestrian and vehicle traffic flow to ensure safety:***

- ***A cross walk with rectangular rapid flashing beacon or other MUTCD compliant signal should be added where High Street changes to two lanes (further South from current location where the road widens due to queue volume with route 53). Consideration should be given to lane configurations shown in Conceptual Plans from Route 53 Corridor Study.***

Response: The Applicant is willing to relocate the crosswalk and provide this RRFB device in the interests of promoting pedestrian safety for all pedestrians that use this crosswalk. The conceptual improvement plan from the Route 53 Corridor Study does not indicate any changes to High Street in the vicinity of the crosswalk other than additional bicycle “sharrow” markings.

- ***Work with CVS to redesign island and include signage or other measures to prevent a left exit from CVS.***

Response: See response above. The Applicant has indicated they will coordinate with the owner of the CVS property to address the compliance with the intended driveway design.

- ***No parking or drop off signs should be added to High Street.***

Response: The Applicant is willing to install these signs along the frontage of the property.



Comment 5: *Consider the Architectural review recommendations for the following items:*

- *Expand sidewalks to include planting strips and move buildings away from High Street.*

Response: This is under the purview of the site engineer and building architect.

- *Incorporate potential design recommendations from the Route-53-Corridor study for bicycle and pedestrian safety as part of these changes.*

Response: See response above. The Applicant is willing to install bike “sharrows” on High Street in the vicinity of the Project.

Comment 5: *Address in writing all previous questions posed by the traffic review consultant comment letter (7/26/21) and the public hearing meetings minutes from 8/4/21 and 9/9/21.*

Response: See response letters from October 12, 2021 addressing Peer Review and ZBA meeting comments.

I trust that the above satisfactorily addresses the comments and if you should have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me at sthornton@rdva.com to discuss any aspects of this letter.

Sincerely,

VANASSE & ASSOCIATES, INC.



Scott W. Thornton, P.E.,
Principal

Cc: S. Gallagher, P. Crabtree – Northland Residential