

Lois Barbour  
William Lazzaro  
Stephen Lynch  
Zoning Board of Appeals, Town of Norwell  
345 Main St  
Norwell, MA 02061

September 26, 2021

Re: 56 Unit Rental Housing Project Proposal – 15 High Street, Norwell

Dear Ms. Barbour, Mr. Lazzaro and Mr. Lynch,

In preparation for the 9/28 Public Hearing, please find a recap of issues that have arisen with regards to the proposed 40B project at 15 High St. As the ZBA reviews and addresses issues primarily pertaining to public health and safety the following is an attempt to organize bullet points into those buckets. The below is not exhaustive but identifies items previously discussed, plus recent drinking water developments, which are of continuing concern:

- Health concerns that are significant and potentially dangerous:
  - On-site sewerage, drainage, and septic system
    - Developer is building the smallest septic system required for the complex
    - So many units in a small area with on-site sewerage is problematic
    - Will the large septic tank and leeching field, albeit slated to be at the bare minimum for the complex, even fit in the proposed site?
    - Frequent cleaning will be necessary and disruptive
    - Renters will not be as concerned with what they flush into the system
  - Water availability, pressure and potability
    - Water resources in Norwell are extremely limited
    - Water ban issued early Spring each year lasts for six months
    - Water ban for 2021 issued at Tier 4 starting in APRIL, now at Tier 3, even with one of the rainiest Spring/Summer seasons in recent record
    - Water ban issued even in Spring of 2015 with mountains of snow
    - Water ban issued years ago when area had flooded basements
    - Elevated levels of PFAS6 detected at South St Treatment Plant – 9/13/21
    - Washington St Well #8 has been taken out of service – 9/13/21
    - South St Well #1 output has been greatly reduced – 9/13/21

- PFAS6 may affect the liver, blood, immune system, thyroid, fetal development and elevate the risk of certain cancers
  - Will the blending of water sources raise PFAS6 levels in reliable sources?
  - Additional area demand will lower water levels and increase PFAS6
  - High PFAS6 levels identified on 7/13/21 not made public until 9/13/21
  - Two-month lag time put compromised consumers at serious health risk
  - Water pressure has been an ongoing issue in this area
  - Water Superintendent stated in a 9/2/21 letter to a resident that “High Street historically has the lowest water pressure in the Town.”
  - Water Board, after several emails, agreed to test pressure in hydrants but not residential properties – study results are forthcoming
  - Water Board only agreed to test individual residences if each homeowner called and arranged a test
  - Residents who had water pressure tests this week saw a marked increase (15-25%) from the usual pressure on the day of the reading, only to have it revert to levels below minimum set by MassDEP (40 psi)
  - A 56-unit rental complex and a new school will increase water problems
  - How will the 54-unit residential Anthemion Senior Lifestyle memory care community under construction at 555 Cordwainer Dr further affect the already low water pressure? Is this development tied into the same water main as High St?
  - Anthemion, along with the proposed 56-unit complex and future projects that will be coming to Accord Park Dr/Cordwainer Dr/Pond St, will subject this area to a never-ending nightmare of water issues
- Safety concerns that are significant and potentially dangerous (have only gotten worse since the completion of Kappy’s/CVS):
    - Traffic at the High St/Grove St/Route 53 intersection is a constant bottleneck
      - Cole School south and a new school north are nearby
      - Children will now be walking up to two miles on terribly busy streets
      - Twice each day during the school year High St can be impassable from parents dropping off/picking up children from school
      - Even minor problems on Route 3 result in large back-ups in the area
      - Route 53 has two lanes in Hingham/Hanover but only one in Norwell
      - Moving the cross walk to where cars have gained speed will not help
      - High St is home to several of the oldest and most historical homes in Norwell and has been designated and signed a “Scenic Road”

- A traffic analysis/study was done the day before Good Friday and by consultants hired by the developer to produce a desired outcome
- It is not clear that the traffic study accounted for the permanent increase in delivery and emergency vehicles because of COVID
- A traffic study should utilize accurate sensors, be done while school is in session (not during COVID lockdowns) and include Route 53 and Grove St as well as High St
- Rockland project could become a major contributing factor
- Significant traffic to and from the Cape spills onto Route 53 and High St from mid-May until mid-September
- Parking overflow from the complex will spill onto High St
- P.A. Landers and other heavy commercial vehicles use High St as a cut through starting at 6 AM each weekday morning
- When High St was last resurfaced, residents were told that curbs would not be put in past Cole School because the street is too narrow and is a “rural road;” this was corroborated by the USPS who will not deliver mail to the door but requires post boxes positioned on the verge/sidewalk that are continuously knocked over by speeding traffic
- This contrasts to the curbs put on Main Street to “slow down” traffic, make it safe for pedestrians and add visual appeal
- Despite resident objections an entrance to Kappy’s/CVS was allowed to be constructed on High St with a “concession” of a “no left turn” sign – no one even attempts to abide by it and the sign is barely visible

We would also like to point out that in addition to the above public health and safety concerns, during the Public Hearings the Developer has given conflicting insight and data relative to the project such as the following:

- Adding trees while increasing visibility for drivers via sight lines - how will that work?
- How long will the proposed landscaping last with water bans and no irrigation?
- Project was pitched to appeal to residents over fifty-five who want to downsize but now the Developer does not know who will live there - no one in that demographic will find a crowded, rental complex that lacks a community room, gym, or any amenities desirable
- Two driveways to/from High St will provide better egress for renters but will further snarl traffic for other drivers
- Limited number of bedrooms obviates need for a robust and adequate septic system

- Traffic engineer who did current study skewed numbers and subsequent peer review did not see anything wrong - study focused on the number of cars leaving the complex during one potential peak hour of the AM commute; the Boston commute, first or second worst in the nation depending on who you ask, is between 6-10 AM and 3-7 PM
- Developer provided a list and used the term “low maintenance” when describing the building materials that will be used on this project which, in the construction industry, is a euphemism for lowest cost/plastic and will result in another CVS-like structure in a residential area that will be inhabited by renters who have no “skin in the game”
- Previous projects that the Developer referenced as comparisons have all, except for thirty-three rental units at The Villages at Seven Springs in Burlington, MA, been owner-occupied condominium communities. It is doubtful that this proposed rental project will resemble anything like Black Rock in Hingham, MA
- Developer also said that because this project is to be built in the western part of town, “it doesn’t have to be as nice” and “it doesn’t have to have as much design” (quotes are paraphrased) as it would be if it were to be built further south – that is discriminatory and an affront to the affected group of residents
- The proposed project is three stories in a residential area that has no other three-story structures; it is oversized for the space and will look out of place
- Jamming 56 units and 90 bedrooms into 3.8 acres (equivalent of 20+ free standing homes which cannot be built) only benefits the Developer and landowners; 14 affordable units do not hide the fact that this is primarily a for-profit apartment complex

As stated at the start of this letter, we would like to use this compilation to zero in on the most major and serious issues at the upcoming Public Hearing. Any one of the above is problematic; taken together, they are alarming and will permanently alter, and not necessarily for the better, the lifestyle for residents of the area long after Northland Residential has gone.

We are also aware of the 40B requirements for communities in Massachusetts but question why, yet again, another large scale, “undesirable” zoning project is being thrust on a beleaguered area of town that can ill afford additional upheaval.

We thank you in advance for your consideration and attention to these matters.

Olivia and Kevin Roberts  
 Lin and Paul Savoy  
 Concerned residents affected by the 15 High St proposal  
 Norwell, MA 02061

cc: Norwell Zoning Board of Appeals ([rmahoney@townofnorwell.net](mailto:rmahoney@townofnorwell.net)) - Roberta to forward to members