

March 10, 2021

Dear members of the ZBA,

I would like to respectfully write a letter asking you to not grant Omni/David Hale the requested wavier to allow for 6 stories for the 2 buildings in the Summer St development. I listened to the last ZBA when this was on the agenda and know there is interest in granting a partial wavier for allowing 5 stories, rather than the requested 6. I appreciate the duty the committee has to that you have to offer affordable housing in our community. Since this project is only offering of 25% affordable housing for this complex and if all affordable units are equally disturbed throughout the complex, not granting this wavier would only be a decrease of 15 affordable units. There would still be 60 affordable units within this complex. Of course if David Hale is concerned about the loss of the 15 affordable units, he could put them elsewhere within the complex. I also heard at the last ZBA meeting that there was concern about this project being affordable if it was decreased by 60 units. I find it hard to believe that 20% decrease in the overall project would be a deal breaker given the incredibly cheap price the land was purchased for.

Not granting this wavier would greatly help the neighbors and character of South Walpole. Either 5 or 6 stories buildings would be so out of place in a quiet area of Walpole. In all honestly, 4 stories is really still too high. Not only would not granting this wavier help with character of South Walpole, but it will on some small level, help with issues such as traffic, strain on schools and other town services. It could also help with some of the safety issues of the entrance and exist being on top of commuter railway tracks.

One of my major concerns with this project is issues it will cause with an already very difficult traffic situation. Game days are unbearable, and the goal of most residents in South Walpole is not to leave their house. However, the traffic from Boyden School drop off and pick up is a daily issue. I believe this has been really bad recently because of COVID and less kids taking the bus. I know that there have been many conversations about a possible reconfiguration of South Walpole Common. While I agree it would be sad to see it change, I recognize that something will need to be done for safety reasons. I believe that Omni should pay 100% of this reconfiguration.

While a project this size really does not belong in such a small area, I do appreciate the need for affordable housing. I also think it is important to take into account what it will do to our community, particularly the people living so close to this project. Any decrease in size has always been main goal and I would appreciate the willingness to consider not granting the height wavier in any manner to Omni.

Thank you,
Dawn Freiburger
Precinct 5 RTM