

Mr. John Lee  
Chairperson  
Walpole Zoning Board of Appeal  
135 School Street  
Walpole MA 02081

June 11, 2020

Re: Case # 03-20

Dear Chairperson Lee:

I am writing to request that the Cedar's Comprehensive permit application proceed on a typical timeline despite the virtual hearing format and not be postponed until in person meetings can be held. This request includes timely review by the boards peer review. Notwithstanding my company's earlier position, my company and its team of advisors now believe that in person hearings in an enclosed space are not likely for a long time nor will they be advisable. I am not criticizing the original emergency declaration. At the time the emergency was declared much less was known about how transmission happens, virtual meetings were experimental and there was some hope of returning to pre-Covid hearing norms once the immediate emergency period ended.

Now the science community has determined the vast majority of Covid transmission happens indoors as a function of the both the intensity of exposure and the time exposed. Since the emergency declaration, virtual hearings have been undertaken in many Massachusetts communities and have proven to be fair and effective. The possibility of safe in person hearings in an enclosed space is unlikely until there is a vaccine, effective treatments or the virus disappears. This is true regardless of whether or when the state of emergency is lifted. Even if in person meetings resume prior to a vaccine or eradication, virtual access to the meeting will need to be provided so as not to discriminate against those who want to participate but are uncomfortable with the risk posed by in person meetings whether they are board members, members of the applicants team or interested members of the public.

Any issues associated with the Cedars development can successfully be discussed in a virtual format. We would appreciate proceeding with our hearings virtually.

I appreciate your time and attention and look forward to working with the board as we all adjust to the new way of working through the permitting process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Hale".

David E. Hale  
Manager  
55 SS LLC and 55 BH LLC