

Public Comments on the Cedar Crossing/ Cedar Edge 40B

Located at 55 Summer Street, Walpole

November 3, 2020

Dear Zoning Board of Appeals,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the Cedar Crossing/Cedar Edge Development by Omni.

I would first like to state I am not in opposition of affordable housing. However, it must be done without creating harm or safety issues to the residents of that area. I have read submissions from the various boards in Walpole as well as David Hale's responses on the Walpole Town Hall website in regards to this project. The first thing that struck me was Mr. Hale's inability to work with logical requests. His comments such as "that is not our responsibility" and "we will not fund..." strike me as a developer who is only interested in profit without being accountable for any negative impact it would create to the town. He is certainly in his right (as a business) to produce profit. But again, the town needs to make sure there is adequate protection due to any safety issues that arise from Developers such as this.

I attended the November 2nd Zoom ZBA Zoom Hearing and my suspicions were more solidified listening to Mr. Hale's responses to various board members. I plan on sharing my thoughts on the traffic issues during Thursday evening's ZBA Zoom Hearing.

This letter will be addressing my other major concerns regarding the safety of this massive project. My biggest concern is the environmental impact this will place not only on the current residents of Walpole but also those who will be living at this 40B location. Newcomers will not likely know the history of this land and possible contamination. I have resided on Georgia Drive since 1993. When Bird Machine Co on Neponset Street closed, it was known by Baker Hughes that the land was contaminated from manufacturing. Millions were paid to have this land cleaned. Property owners in close proximity were invited to tour the land and the efforts put forth. During this tour, I learned several things:

1. There was recorded oil, petroleum and asbestos spills on various sections of this property which were pointed out to us. The groundwater still contains contaminants such as metals, solvents, hydrocarbons and chlorobenzenes.
2. The final finding (upon completion of the clean up efforts) was "that which remains, poses no significant risk to human and environmental health".
3. There are various levels of what "clean" constitutes. "Clean enough" is good for other industrial uses for that site but not for residential use.

I mention all this because there is a reason neighboring residents were invited to tour this land. Was I directly next to it? No. But close enough were engineers (who sent out the invite) felt there could be possible impact to residents in the radius of this property. Omni is planning on building a 300 unit 40B adjacent to the Bird Machine land. These new residents will be living much closer. This enormous undertaking is located on the Great Cedar Swamp aquifer! The disruption to the soil and ground water will be like nothing we have ever seen in such a volatile location. These are not ball fields or a dog park that people visit and use on a limited basis. People will be living there!

During a comprehensive site assessment (CSA) of the Bird Machine property, ongoing monitoring was needed as there could be potential movement of contaminants which exceed drinking water criteria. Groundwater is the primary environment media through which site contaminants could migrate. Once Omni starts this massive excavation, a Pandora's Box will be open with no way to close it. The final report for the land at Bird Machine carefully used their words. They decided it fit the criteria of "not being significant" enough. But, there IS risk there. Would any of you like to reside on or near that property? Would you be comfortable in drinking water that is sourced near there? Probably not. Unearthing soil and disrupting ground water for this 40B will result in a host of issues. Maybe not right away. Remember how decades ago we were told asbestos is fine and safe? Now we are told not to disrupt it for fear of it becoming airborne and inhaled. My biggest fear is that groundwater travels. I'm sure drought and heavy rain conditions alter this flow even more. Why are we taking this chance? Why would the ZBA even entertain the idea of allowing such a huge development to be located in this area? I know Mr. Hale said he took soil samples himself, saying everything was fine. Why are we taking his word? This project involves many, many acres of land. If there happens to be some seepage of contaminants, how could anyone be 100% sure where it exactly is? I say we leave well enough alone to keep us safe.

Traffic safety is my second biggest concern, but I will share my thoughts on that November 5th.

Water and Sewer usage is my third concern which I would like to share with you all. When the folks who owned Sharon Country Day (AKA: Jarvis Farm) wanted to sell the land, they offered it to the town of Walpole first. It wasn't even put to a vote for the townspeople. We were informed there was an aquifer there which impacted Walpole's drinking water. Rather than take the chance of having that land be developed, it would be in the best interest if the town purchased the land and pay for it by increasing our water/sewer rates. Why is that aquifer more important than the Great Cedar Swamp aquifer? I was under the impression all aquifers were vital. The town of Walpole have implemented a water ban for several years now that limits water usage. Mr. Hale wants us to believe the additional revenue from his development will add monies to Walpole's budget. You and I both know this will be a wash. Mr. Hale also made it clear his units will not be overseen and abide by the water use limits that the town sets during these bans. The strain these 300 units will place on our water and sewer will be astronomical. The Preserve on route 1 & Pine Street already do so. I'm sure the developers met all of the necessary regulations for water & sewer but low and behold, our neighborhood suffered consequences of that development. Pine, Washington Street, Georgia Drive and Barbara Road all had to deal with a terrible stench each day. Engineers from Walpole's Water & Sewer finally discovered the source was coming from The Preserve. The "fix" was to have The Preserve change their sewer's cycling time. I am also astounded that Mr. Hale is even asking for waivers associated with water and sewer for his development.

There are other concerns but I feel environmental contamination and traffic issues are the biggest safety reasons this 40B should not move forward.

I appreciate all of your efforts in keeping us residents safe.

Respectfully,

Lori Swafford-Falter

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