

Good morning – please find the attached PDF letter to the Walpole Zoning Board of Appeals from South Walpole United Methodist Church. We have also included the text of the letter below.

Sincerely,

Pastor Phil Michaels & the South Walpole United Methodist Church Church Council

March 27th, 2021

To the Walpole Zoning Board of Appeals:

This letter is to state our position to you regarding the proposed 40b Project, comprised of Cedar Edge and Cedar Crossing, to be located at 55 Summer St, South Walpole, MA, 02071.

Since our church leadership became aware of this project in its early stages, we have kept a close eye on the proceedings and watched with great interest as to what might be taking place here in the South Walpole community of 02071 that we share with some 950 of our friends and neighbors.

While our church attracts a fair number of people from outside of South Walpole, we also have sizeable amount of our congregation who live right here "in the neighborhood" of 02071. Many of our number have attended the meetings, some have written letters to you, and all those who both live and worship here feel they have a great personal and corporate interest in what happens in our community, including this proposed 40b project.

As a church, we want to make it *very clear* that we look forward to *welcoming with open arms* all those who will be joining our 02071 community as our new friends and neighbors as a result of this proposed 40b project. We realize the project, due it being a 40b development, will almost certainly go forward. We also *strongly support* efforts to bring more affordable housing to all people, and certainly right here in our community of 02071. We *embrace* the idea of helping more people be able to readily afford housing in what is one of the most expensive housing markets in the nation. Therefore, we have not been opposed to, and are not opposed to, this project on its face. To be clear: We are *for* more affordable housing, and we look forward to welcoming our new neighbors!

What we *are* opposed to is the potential disruption or even destruction of the character of our existing community by the scope and density of this project, as well as related traffic flow proposals such as the destruction of the historic South Walpole Common that sits directly in front of our physical church building, which is also home to the South Walpole Community Pre-School.

The Common is the very heart of historic South Walpole, and what identifies us as the unique community of 02071 that we are, and as such, under no circumstances will we accept its destruction as a result of this or *any* project that may come to our community, either now or in the future.

We recognize that traffic flow and safety is already a great concern around the Common and in all of South Walpole, that it was so long before the proposed 40b project, and that it will be long after the 40b project is constructed, in whatever form it finally takes.

No one knows this better than the congregation at South Walpole United Methodist Church, and our friends and neighbors who abut or live near the Common.

Improvements to traffic flow and safety *are* needed at the Common intersections. This need will only increase dramatically and exponentially with the addition of up to a 300 unit development just one

block from the Common. We *support* upgrades and improvements to traffic flow and safety at the Common. What we *do not* support is ripping up the Common and shredding the historicity and character of the area in order to do so.

If the scope and density of the 40b project is such that you feel it requires anything resembling the proposed realignment of the Common intersections and the resulting destruction of the Common that our entire community has enjoyed for generations, and that sets at the very heart of the character of our community, then the scope and density of the 40b project is too large.

We also feel that six or five story buildings are far too large for the character of South Walpole, regardless of how far set back the structures are and whether or not the surrounding geographical terrain would "shield" these structures from view. Even four story buildings are too large for our community, however, we recognize that four story buildings are most likely inevitable with the coming of this project. Therefore, we strongly recommend to the ZBA that no more than four story buildings be allowed in this project, because that is already a compromise with the existing size and character of the 02071 community. There is no reason to go beyond this, as the developer has already shown with the original plans for this project that four story building are more than sufficient to create the number of units desired, and you should not bow to pressure from the developer or anyone else to do otherwise. If the developer truly wants to be the good neighbor that he says he does, and to bring a welcome addition to our community, he will be in full agreement with this, *no matter how long it takes* to arrive at a workable solution.

Our congregation, with support from a number in our community as well, recently underwent a project to restore the steeple and clock tower of our church building located across the street from the east side of the Common. It was no small project and came at no small expense, and involved much hard work and dedication by many members of our community as well as our congregation.

One of the significant reasons we thought it was so important to invest in the steeple was precisely because of the historic nature of this area of South Walpole, and the community of 02071 as a whole. Yes, we did this for "our" church. But we also did it, very intentionally and conscientiously, with the character and pride of the historic 02071 South Walpole community in mind. To think that the town would then authorize the destruction of the Common as the result of allowing the scope and density of this 40b project to be too large, when it does not have to be so large, to us, is untenable.

Therefore, we are asking you to do everything you can to ensure that the scope and density of this 40b project does not go beyond four story structures, and does not result in the destruction of the South Walpole Common, so that all of us who call 02071 "home" can both continue to enjoy the exceptional character of our historic community, and welcome in many new friends and neighbors who will soon also call 02071 "home."

Again, this is *our* community, along with the some 950 friends and neighbors who already live here. We *look forward* to *sharing our community* with the many new neighbors who will be joining us here in our home of 02071. However, we want to share the wonderful community that we have now, not a community that is so overwhelmed by so many new people, so much new traffic, such tall structures, and the destruction of the most historic and recognizable places we have, that it no longer resembles the community we have all come to know and love, and in many cases, lived our entire lives in. We *want* to share the character of the existing community that we *have*, not an unrecognizable place that is overrun by too many people, and too much traffic, crammed into too small of a location. Thank you for your time, and your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Pastor Phil". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pastor Phil Michaels
& the Church Council of the South Walpole United Methodist Church