

**Peter Pouliot
1166 Franklin Street
Stoneham, MA 02180**

December 13, 2013

MassHousing
Gregory Watson
One Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108

Subject: The Commons at Weiss Farm;
MassHousing Project #SA-13-006

Dear Gregory Watson:

As a resident of Stoneham, I am very concerned about the application for Site Approval submitted by Weiss Farm, LLC currently under review at MassHousing. The proposed construction of 264 apartments and 456 parking spaces at the proposed location at 170 Franklin Street is inappropriate. I urge MassHousing to reject the application.

Summary of Problems

The problems include inconsistency with local housing needs, busy Franklin Street and safety of children, disregard for local zoning laws, construction not in keeping with surrounding residential neighborhoods, destruction of wetlands, possible health issues, potential water drainage and sewage problems and negative environmental impact.

Reasons for Project Rejection

Additional Housing is Not Needed in Stoneham

Construction of 264 apartments on Franklin Street is inconsistent with local housing needs based on the latest decennial U. S. Census for Stoneham and surrounding communities. For 2010, Stoneham had 9,458 rented and owned housing units of which 8,994 were occupied and 464 were vacant, a rental vacancy rate of 7.4% and a homeowner vacancy rate of .9%. Taking a broader view, Stoneham and seven bordering cities and towns (Malden, Medford, Melrose, Reading, Wakefield, Winchester, and Woburn) collectively had 114,828 rented and owned housing units of which 109,158 were occupied and 5,670 were vacant, a rental vacancy rate of 6.1% and a homeowner vacancy rate of 1%. This data shows that construction of 264 additional apartments in Stoneham is

obviously not necessary. (Source: American Factfinder, U. S. Department of Commerce, U. S. Census Bureau).

Stoneham currently has a program that addresses the housing needs of low income people. Stoneham Housing Authority oversees 285 units of low income housing (of which 15 units were vacant due to remodeling as of 9/9/2013.) Tenants pay not more than 30% of their income toward the rent. (Source: Sharon Wilkins, Executive Director of Stoneham Housing Authority at board meeting held on 9/9/2013.)

Busy Franklin Street and Endangerment of Children

Construction of 264 apartments and 456 parking spaces will bring hundreds of additional automobiles entering and exiting Franklin Street on a daily basis creating a huge safety issue especially for the high number of school children in the Franklin Street area.

Franklin Street is already highly traversed because of excessive demand on the roadway. On Franklin Street there are several condominiums and apartment buildings, two child care centers, a high school, a Dunkin Donuts, a pizza store, a restaurant, a convenience store and other businesses. On top of all that an assisted living complex with 88 apartments is currently under construction on Franklin Street.

Residents of Stoneham and Melrose use Franklin Street as the way to reach Main Street and the center of Town where there are more businesses and restaurants, a condominium, the Town common, a theater, a post office, a library and the nearby Town Hall.

Commuters from Stoneham and Melrose use Franklin Street because it provides an access way to three major highways, Routes 1, 93 and 95. The lengthy backup of automobiles in the high school area on Franklin Street is intolerable especially when school opens and closes each day. Parents use Franklin Street to drive their kids to public and private schools in Stoneham such as to Stoneham High School and to the elementary schools such as Colonial Park Elementary School, South Elementary School and Greater Boston Academy. Buses servicing three campuses at the Mystic Valley Regional Charter School in Malden pick up and drop off students at two locations on Franklin Street in Stoneham. (See MVRCS website at www.mvracs.org.)

There are 12 schools in Stoneham, six public and six private, accounting for a student population of 3305. Nine of the 12 schools are within a half mile of Franklin Street. Three of the 12 schools are on Franklin Street including the high school which has a student population of 675. The other two schools on Franklin are private for preschool aged students.

Given the high concentration of schools in the already busy Franklin Street area, the addition of 264 apartments and hundreds of automobiles on Franklin Street will create a serious safety issue for children. Additional police, traffic lights and traffic calming devices are not likely to make Franklin Street any safer for children. To consider adding an apartment project anywhere on Franklin Street is ridiculous and obviously unacceptable.

Disregard for Local Zoning Law

Developer's plans for apartment buildings do not conform with local zoning laws or with surrounding residential neighborhoods. Required lot area per dwelling unit is 10,000 square feet but plans are for only 4,236 square feet per dwelling unit. The required building height limit is 30 feet but plans are for 66 foot buildings, more than double the allowable height. The permitted use of the land is for single family homes but plans are for an apartment building. Required parking space is for 2.1 cars per dwelling unit but plans are for 1.7 cars per dwelling unit. Maximum number of signs allowed are one but plans are for six monument signs and five directional. Maximum size of signs are one square foot but plans are for 650 square foot signs.

It is clear that the developer has no intention of conforming with Town zoning laws or construction that is in keeping with surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Encroachment on Wetlands

Much of the 25.7 acres of land on Weiss Farm is wetlands. There is a large wetland area on the west and north sides of the property and a wetland area on the east side adjacent to Franklin Street. Wetlands need to be protected. The project will encroach upon a significant amount of the remaining wetlands in Stoneham.

Potential Health Hazards

A drainage channel reportedly was excavated through the wetland area along the perimeter of the farm area. The channel flows to a wetland area in the southeast corner of the project site. A small pump station adjacent to Franklin Street pumps water into a culvert under Franklin Street. The water flows under Franklin Street and then southerly in a drainage channel.

The massive size of the proposed development will likely add to displacement of water causing continuous flooding problems for homes in nearby neighborhoods from constant runoff. Homes in adjacent areas have received water in their basements in the past and now it can only get worse even creating a health hazard from contaminated water.

Water and Sewer

In the project plans, it is reported that there is a 12 inch ductile iron water line in Franklin Street adjacent to the project site. A hydrant flow test reportedly was

conducted on July 23, 2013, by the Stoneham Water Department. The test indicated a static pressure of 65 psi, a residual pressure of 62 psi and a flow of 865 gallons per day. How do we know that this is adequate pressure for the proposed development? If it is not adequate, who has to pay for the necessary modifications?

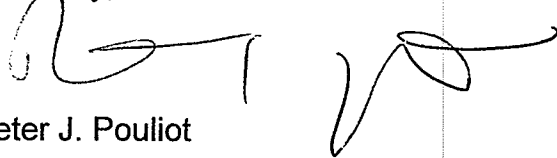
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Negative Environmental Impact

Stoneham is unique because the Middlesex Fells Reservation comprises one third of the 6.6 square miles of land area in Stoneham. The Fells is enjoyed by Stoneham residents as well as residents from communities in the surrounding area. The Fells is readily accessible by bus lines, rapid transit and commuter rail and by automobile from Routes 28, I-93 and I-95. Construction of 264 apartments and 456 parking spaces on Franklin Street leading to an increase in traffic, congestion and pollution caused by hundreds of additional automobiles will further erode what remains of the unique bucolic environment of the Middlesex Fells area enjoyed by residents of Stoneham and surrounding communities. (Sources: FY 2012 Town Annual Report and website of Friends of the Fells at <http://www.fells.org/index.html>.)

Thank you for reading my lengthy letter. As you can see, I have a number of concerns. The overwhelming number of residents of Stoneham believe that this apartment project is inappropriate for the Town of Stoneham especially at the proposed location on Franklin Street. The application should be rejected.

Sincerely,



Peter J. Pouliot

cc: Members of the Board of Selectmen, 35 Central St. Stoneham, MA 02180
Member of the Planning Board, 35 Central St. Stoneham, MA 02180
David Ragucci, Town Administrator, 35 Central St. Stoneham, MA 02180

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Sincerely,



Rebecca R. Pouliot

cc: Members of the Board of Selectmen, 35 Central St. Stoneham, MA 02180
Member of the Planning Board, 35 Central St. Stoneham, MA 02180
David Ragucci, Town Administrator, 35 Central St. Stoneham, MA 02180

Name: Carol A. Pirello / DACE F. HUBBARD

Address: 8 Wilson Rd.

Stoneham, MA 02180

Date: 12/18/13

Members of the Board
Board of Selectmen
35 Central Street
Stoneham, MA 02180

Subject: The Commons at Weiss Farm;
MassHousing Project #SA-13-006

Dear Members of the Board:

As a resident of Stoneham, I am firmly opposed to the application for Site Approval submitted by Weiss Farm, LLC currently under review at MassHousing. The proposed construction of 3 five story buildings 66 feet high with 264 apartments and 456 parking spaces at 170 Franklin Street is totally inappropriate for that location. I urge you to ask MassHousing to reject the application.

Reasons for Project Rejection

Traffic on Congested Franklin Street and Safety of School Children

Construction of 264 apartments and 456 parking spaces will bring hundreds of additional automobiles entering and exiting Franklin Street on a daily basis. Given that Stoneham has no public transportation on Franklin Street, tenants living at the Commons at Weiss Farm will travel by automobile.

There is no way that Franklin Street can handle additional automobile traffic. Franklin Street is already burdened with excessive traffic because of commuters, schools, existing apartments and condominiums and places of business. The backup of cars on Franklin Street is especially bad on school days.

Commuters from Melrose and Stoneham regularly use Franklin Street because it provides a corridor to three major highways, Routes 1, 93, 95.

Parents use Franklin Street to drive their children to schools in Stoneham. There are 12 schools in Stoneham nine of which are within a half mile of Franklin Street. The entrances to three schools on Franklin Street including the high school with a student population of 675 are all within a few hundred feet of Weiss Farm. There are two schools on Franklin Street for preschool aged children.

The school committee in Stoneham recently used traffic data to determine that the Middle School could not be constructed on existing high school property because it would severely impact daily traffic and safety on Franklin Street. How can the developer rationalize construction of a huge apartment project on Franklin Street when the Middle School could not be constructed there?

Given the high concentration of schools in the already congested Franklin Street area, the addition of 264 apartments and hundreds of automobiles on Franklin Street will create a serious safety issue for school children. To consider adding an apartment project anywhere on Franklin Street is obviously unacceptable.

Disregard for Local Zoning Laws

Developer's plans request relief from six Town zoning laws. For example, Stoneham limits building height to 30 feet but plans are for 66 foot high buildings, more than double the allowable height. It is clear that the developer has no intention of conforming with Town zoning laws or construction that is in keeping with surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Water Drainage and Potential Health Hazards

Much of the 26 acres at Weiss Farm is wetlands. Accumulation of water from rainfall on the property at Weiss Farm and flooding of the surrounding area historically has been a problem for homes adjacent to Weiss Farm which have received water in the past. The massive size of the proposed development will likely make water drainage worse as formerly pervious land becomes impervious with new construction. An increase in water runoff from the combination of new construction and farmland soil erosion could create a health hazard from polluted water.

Unwelcome Increase in Demand on Town Utilities

The addition of 264 apartments consisting of 27 studios, 105 one bedroom, 114 two bedroom and 18 three bedroom units will increase demand on our entire school system at the elementary, middle and high school levels requiring marked increases in our teaching staff, support staff, school supplies and building space. Crowded classrooms at any level are not what this town desires or needs. A project of this size and scope would require additional fire and police personnel and other resources as well. Our need for additional town personnel and resources would create a budget shortfall that would have to be subsidized by Stoneham taxpayers. This project undoubtedly will increase our taxes.

Additional Housing Units are Not Needed in Stoneham

The latest decennial U. S. Census shows that Stoneham had 464 vacant housing units and a rental vacancy rate of 7.4%. Stoneham and seven bordering cities and towns had 5,670 vacant housing units and a rental vacancy rate of 6.1%. Construction of 264 additional apartments in Stoneham is not necessary.

Sincerely,