

October 21, 2013

John Eaton
18 Citation Ave
Stoneham, MA 02180

Members of the Board
Board of Selectmen
35 Central Street
2nd Floor
Stoneham, MA 02180

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

Dear Members of the Board,

A resident of Stoneham since 2003, 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 members of the Board to ask MassHousing to reject the application for reasons stated below.

1. Inconsistency with Local Housing Needs

Construction of 264 apartments on Franklin Street is inconsistent with local housing needs based on U. S. Census data 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. The data shows that Stoneham had a rental vacancy rate of 7.4% and a homeowner vacancy rate of .9%.

Stoneham is bordered by seven cities and towns including Malden, Medford, Melrose, Reading, Wakefield, Winchester and Woburn. Collectively, the eight cities and towns had 114,828 rented and owned housing units of which 109,158 were occupied and 5,670 were vacant. Collectively, the eight cities and town had a rental vacancy rate of 6.1% and a homeowner vacancy rate of 1%. (See enclosed spread sheet summarizing U S Census data for the eight

communities. Source: American Factfinder, U. S. Department of Commerce, U. S. Census Bureau.)

Given that Stoneham had a rental vacancy rate of 7.4% and a homeowner vacancy rate of .9%, and that there were 464 vacant housing units, it is not clear why construction of 264 additional apartments in Stoneham is necessary, even without consideration of new housing constructed since the 2010 census. Taking a broader view, given that eight cities and towns in the local area including Stoneham collectively had a rental vacancy rate of 6.1% and a homeowner vacancy rate of 1%, and that there were 5,670 vacant housing units in the local area, construction of 264 additional apartments in Stoneham is obviously not necessary.

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.)

2. 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.

As you know, Franklin Street is already highly traversed because of excessive demands 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.

The lengthy backup of automobiles in the high school area on Franklin Street is intolerable especially when school opens and closes each day. Commuters from Stoneham and Melrose use Franklin Street because it provides a route to two major highways, Routes 93 and 95. Parents use Franklin Street to drive their kids to 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 (MVRCS) 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. (See enclosed spread sheet on schools.)

I have personally seen kids bicycling all over the road in front of my car while driving down Franklin Street. Not smart, but that is what kids do and Stoneham has a lot of kids. U. S. Census data for 2010 shows that Stoneham had a population of 21,437 with 3,546 (16.5%) between the ages of 5 and 19.

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.

3. 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 and I-95. Construction of 264 apartments on Franklin Street with the associated increase in traffic, congestion and pollution caused by hundreds of additional automobiles will likely destroy the formerly unique bucolic environment enjoyed by residents of Stoneham and other local communities. (Sources: FY 2012 Town Annual Report and website of Friends of the Fells at <http://www.fells.org/index.html>.)

It is my understanding that MassHousing has a site visit scheduled for Monday, October 28, 2013. I urge members of the Board of Selectmen to attend that site visit and bring these issues to the attention of MassHousing.

Thank you for your support in this matter. I look forward to your presentation to MassHousing that will include this and other information in support of the people of Stoneham who believe that this apartment project is inappropriate for the Town of Stoneham at the proposed location on Franklin Street.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Eaton", written in a cursive style.

John Eaton

FRIENDS OF STONEHAM

PREPARED BY: JOHN EATON

DATE: 9/14/2013

UPDATED: 9/23/2013

WORKPAPER TITLE : SELECTED DATA AND COMPUTATIONS FROM 2010 U S CENSUS
 STONEHAM & SURROUNDING CITIES & TOWNS

<u>Item</u> <u>No.</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>City of</u> <u>Malden</u>	<u>City of</u> <u>Medford</u>	<u>City of</u> <u>Melrose</u>	<u>Town of</u> <u>Reading</u>	<u>Town of</u> <u>Stoneham</u>	<u>Town of</u> <u>Wakefield</u>	<u>Town of</u> <u>Winchester</u>	<u>City of</u> <u>Woburn</u>	<u>Totals</u>
POPULATION										
1	Total population	59,450	56,173	26,983	24,747	21,437	24,932	21,374	38,120	273,216
2	Population aged 5 to 19	9,230	8,221	4,738	5,098	3,546	4,377	5,070	5,993	46,273
3	% population aged 5 to 19	15.5%	14.6%	17.6%	20.6%	16.5%	17.6%	23.7%	15.7%	16.9%
HOUSEHOLDS BY TYPE										
4	Total households	23,673	22,810	11,213	9,305	8,994	9,994	7,645	15,524	109,158
5	Family households	14,317	13,207	7,076	6,685	5,616	6,547	5,783	9,828	69,059
6	Non-family households	9,356	9,603	4,137	2,620	3,378	3,447	1,862	5,696	40,099
7	% Family households to total	60.5%	57.9%	63.1%	71.8%	62.4%	65.5%	75.6%	63.3%	63.3%
HOUSING OCCUPANCY										
8	Total housing units	25,161	24,046	11,751	9,617	9,458	10,500	7,986	16,309	114,828
9	Occupied housing units	23,673	22,810	11,213	9,305	8,994	9,994	7,645	15,524	109,158
10	Vacant housing units	1,488	1,236	538	312	464	506	341	785	5,670
Detail of vacant housing units:										
11	vacant units for sale only	125	142	60	61	59	78	65	72	662
12	vacant units sold not occupied	43	39	20	22	15	19	36	13	207
13	vacant units for rent	856	591	262	98	226	240	74	401	2,748
14	vacant units rented not occupied	33	45	23	6	7	4	8	24	150
15	Vacant for seasonal, recreational or occasional use	39	78	37	33	59	41	66	72	425
16	All other vacants	392	341	136	92	98	124	92	203	1,478
17	Vacant housing units	1,488	1,236	538	312	464	506	341	785	5,670

<u>Item</u> <u>No.</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>City of</u> <u>Malden</u>	<u>City of</u> <u>Medford</u>	<u>City of</u> <u>Melrose</u>	<u>Town of</u> <u>Reading</u>	<u>Town of</u> <u>Stoneham</u>	<u>Town of</u> <u>Wakefield</u>	<u>Town of</u> <u>Winchester</u>	<u>City of</u> <u>Woburn</u>	<u>Totals</u>
<u>HOUSING TENURE</u>										
18	Occupied housing units	23,673	22,810	11,213	9,305	8,994	9,994	7,645	15,524	109,158
19	Owner-occupied housing units	9,982	13,028	7,472	7,248	6,165	7,330	6,357	9,474	67,056
20	Population in owner-occupied units	28,079	32,888	20,097	20,743	16,026	19,760	18,370	24,962	180,925
21	Renter-occupied housing units	13,691	9,782	3,741	2,057	2,829	2,664	1,288	6,050	42,102
22	Population in renter-occupied units	30,998	21,326	6,619	3,823	5,167	4,918	2,681	12,835	88,367
23	% population in owner-occupied units (20/1 X 100)	47.2%	58.5%	74.5%	83.8%	74.8%	79.3%	85.9%	65.5%	66.2%
24	% population in renter-occupied units (27/1 X 100)	52.1%	38.0%	24.5%	15.4%	24.1%	19.7%	12.5%	33.7%	32.3%
<u>VACANCY RATES</u>										
25	Homeowner vacancy rate	1.2%	1.1%	0.8%	0.8%	0.9%	1.1%	1.0%	0.8%	1.0%
26	Rental vacancy rate	5.9%	5.7%	6.5%	4.5%	7.4%	8.3%	5.4%	6.2%	6.1%
<u>HOMEOWNER VACANCY RATES</u>										
27	vacant units for sale only	125	142	60	61	59	78	65	72	662
28	vacant units sold not occupied	43	39	20	22	15	19	36	13	207
29	owner occupied units	9,982	13,028	7,472	7,248	6,165	7,330	6,357	9,474	67,056
30	total	10,150	13,209	7,552	7,331	6,239	7,427	6,458	9,559	67,925
31	homeowner vacancy rate (27/30 X 100)	1.2%	1.1%	0.8%	0.8%	0.9%	1.1%	1.0%	0.8%	1.0%
<u>RENTAL VACANCY RATES</u>										
32	vacant units for rent	856	591	262	98	226	240	74	401	2,748
33	vacant units rented not occupied	33	45	23	6	7	4	8	24	150
34	renter-occupied units	13,691	9,782	3,741	2,057	2,829	2,664	1,288	6,050	42,102
35	total	14,580	10,418	4,026	2,161	3,062	2,908	1,370	6,475	45,000
36	rental vacancy rate (32/35 X 100)	5.9%	5.7%	6.5%	4.5%	7.4%	8.3%	5.4%	6.2%	6.1%

FRIENDS OF STONEHAM

PREPARED BY: JOHN EATON

DATE: 9/25/2013

UPDATED: 10/21/2013

WORKPAPER TITLE: SHORTEST DRIVING DISTANCES BETWEEN FRANKLIN STREET AND STONEHAM SCHOOLS

<u>Item</u>	<u>Starting Point</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>Type of School</u>	<u>School Address</u>	<u>Distance (Miles)</u>	<u>Student Population</u>	<u>Grades</u>	<u>Source</u>
1	Franklin Street	Central Elementary School	public	36 Pomeworth St	0.5	309	K1 to 5	Public School Superintendent's office
2	Franklin Street	Colonial Park Elementary Sch	public	30 Avalon St	0.3	219	PK,K1 to 5	Public School Superintendent's office
3	Franklin Street	Greater Boston Academy/Edgewood Elementary	private	108 Pond St	0.7	198	presch, K -12	Sherrie Tulloch, Admin Assist
4	Franklin Street	Kindercare Learning Center	private	136 Franklin St	0	125	preschool	Melissa Davis, Assist Dir
5	Franklin Street	Montessori Home School	private	8 Rustic Rd	0.1	10	preschool	Maria Lutf, Owner
6	Franklin Street	Purpose School	private	1 Church St	0.1	160	preschool	Kristie Colwell, Director
7	Franklin Street	Robin Hood School	public	70 Oak St	1.2	268	K1 to 5	Public School Superintendent's office
8	Franklin Street	South Elementary School	public	11 Summer St	0.4	320	PK,K1 to 5	Public School Superintendent's office
9	Franklin Street	St Patrick School	private	20 Pleasant St	0.3	384	PK,K1 to 8	Deborah Kelley, School Secretary
10	Franklin Street	Stoneham High School	public	149 Franklin St	0	675	9 to 12	Public School Superintendent's office
11	Franklin Street	Stoneham Middle School	public	101 Central St	0.7	570	6 to 8	Public School Superintendent's office
12	Franklin Street	Teachable Moments	private	188 Franklin St	0	67	preschool	Linda Dunlop, Owner
		Total number of students				3,305		

U S Census data for 2010 shows that 16.5% of Stoneham's population of 21,437 is between ages 5 to 19.

Sources:

Distances were measured using private automobile, street map, tripometer and GPS.