

TOWN OF
STONEHAM

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February 18, 2014

Ms. Katherine Lacy, AICP
Permitting and Monitoring Specialist
MassHousing
One Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108

RE: Project# SA-13-007 "The Commons at Weiss Farm"

Dear Ms. Lacy:

Please accept this letter on behalf of the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Stoneham in reference to the application for project eligibility approval submitted to MassHousing by John M. Corcoran and Company (the "Applicant") for a 264 dwelling unit development ("proposed development") off of Franklin Street in Stoneham, Massachusetts.

You are in possession of our December 18, 2013 letter to MassHousing wherein the Board urged MassHousing, in the strongest possible terms, to reject the above noted application.

Subsequent to our December 18, 2013 correspondence, on or about January 13, 2014, the Applicant submitted revised plans to MassHousing.

In our December 18, 2013 letter, we provided detailed reasons as to why MassHousing should reject the above noted application. We incorporate each and every one of those reasons in this letter and repeat each and every substantive comment made in our December 18, 2013 correspondence.

Even a causal review of the Applicant's "revised plans" make clear that the proposal remains unacceptable and inconsistent with law, policy, MassHousing's "Smart Growth Criteria Scorecard" and the Commonwealth's "Sustainable Development Principles".

We do not see the need to repeat the detailed comments presented in our December 18th letter, as each comment relates to the revised plans to the same degree as they related to the original plans.

In its revised plans, the Applicant calls to MassHousing's attention changes made to the original plans and the "benefits" of the same. The Applicant highlights four changes and their attendant "benefits" including the "addition of five townhouses", "reorientation of larger buildings", "reduction in length of buildings" and "inclusion of parking within larger building".

The above noted revisions to the plans neither address any of the Board's previous comments and objections nor resolve the unreasonable and unsupported density of the proposed project at the proposed location.

The Applicant's stated "benefits" correlated with each proposed change are nothing short of admissions that the original plan is poorly planned and unacceptably flawed. Notably, we are insulted—and MassHousing should be too—by the now tired ploy of proposing a wholly unacceptable project only to thereafter propose "revisions" and then, as here, tout the "benefits" of the revisions.

Unfortunately, the "addition of five townhouses", "reorientation of larger buildings", "reduction in length of buildings" and "inclusion of parking within larger building" does nothing to improve upon the issues we identified in our December correspondence. The proposed revisions do nothing to improve or make safe the originally submitted project. Rather, the revisions literally move identified problems presented by the original plans helter-skelter around the locus. The Applicant should not be rewarded for such cynical behavior or for proposing and continuing to propose, such a flawed and dangerous development plan.

Finally, we remain puzzled by why this application has not been rejected by MassHousing by now, for all the reasons we identified in our December letter but most notably, as the proposed project—even as "revised"—so thoroughly violates and ignores MassHousing's "Smart Growth Criteria Scorecard"¹. See Ipswich Town Planner Glenn Gibbs letter.

Using the "Smart Growth Criteria Scorecard", the project scores zero (0) points.

- The project does not "contribute to revitalization of town center";
- The project is not "walkable" or "located in a municipally approved growth center";
- The project does not have a "letter of support from the Chief Elected Official"
- The project does not "concentrate development" most notably in that the proposed development is not "compact and/or clustered so as to preserve undeveloped land";
- The project does not "restore and enhance environment [sic]";

¹ MassHousing's "Smart Growth Criteria Scorecard" incorporates the Commonwealth's "Sustainable Development Principles".

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- The project is not “fair”; it does not “improve the neighborhood” or include a “concerted public participation effort” (as we noted previously, the Applicant failed to meet with the Town, failed to present its project until after it filed with MassHousing (and only after we requested the same) and wrongly stated that it met with the Town Administrator and Town Counsel on May 9, 2013 to “keep town [sic] informed on the status of the Project”;
- The project does not “conserve resources”;
- The project does not “provide transportation choice” and is totally “unwalkable” to public transportation;
- The project does not “increase job opportunities”;
- The project does not “foster sustainable businesses”; and
- The project does not “plan regionally”, rather, as MassHousing is well aware, the proposed project will have dramatic regional impacts. See letters to MassHousing from Representative Jason M. Lewis (whose district includes Stoneham) and Melrose Mayor Robert Dolan opposing the proposed project.
- See Town of Ipswich Planner Glenn C. Gibbs’ letter

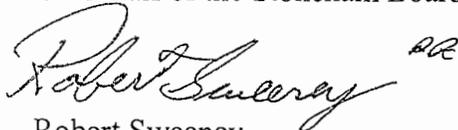
With a literal score of zero (0)—using MassHousing’s own “Scorecard”—we cannot fathom any response from MassHousing other than a categorical rejection of the Applicant’s request for Project Eligibility approval.

We repeat our detailed comments contained in our December 18, 2013 letter and add the comments noted above. Once again, the Board of Selectmen urges MassHousing, in the strongest possible terms, to deny the Applicant’s request for project eligibility approval. We reach this conclusion and recommendation based upon on our review of the project eligibility application and revised plans, our personal knowledge of the locus and the immediate neighborhood, and the severe environmental and infrastructural constraints of both. As noted previously, there is no rational support for issuing project eligibility approval for this project at this location and we respectfully suggest that MassHousing must deny the above noted application.

On behalf of the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Stoneham, please let me know if you have any questions or would like additional support for any of the comments made above or as contained in our December 18, 2013 correspondence.

Very truly yours,

On behalf of the Stoneham Board of Selectmen as its Chairman,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert Sweeney". To the right of the signature, there are the initials "RS" written in a smaller, simpler script.

Robert Sweeney

cc: Steven Cicatelli, Esq., counsel for the Applicant.