



# *The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE HOUSE, ROOM 466, BOSTON, MA 02133

## **REP. JASON M. LEWIS**

31<sup>ST</sup> MIDDLESEX DISTRICT

PROUDLY SERVING THE PEOPLE  
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### Committees:

Vice Chair, Public Health

Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities

Community Development and Small Business

State Administration and Regulatory Oversight

December 2, 2013

MassHousing

Attn. Katherine Lacy, AICP

One Beacon Street

Boston, MA 02180

Dear Ms. Lacy:

As the State Representative for the Town of Stoneham, I am writing to share my concerns with you about the proposed development of the Weiss Farm site on Franklin Street in Stoneham.

Specifically, after careful analysis with the Town of Stoneham, we do not believe that the required "findings" for issuance of a project eligibility letter found at 760 CMR 56.04(4) are appropriately met by the developer's proposal for the following reasons:

- **Environmental and Flood Concerns:** The Weiss Farm site is not appropriate for residential construction because over 50% of the area is federally- and state-regulated wetlands. Fifty years of documentation shows that these wetlands have been prone to flooding. Adding fill over 6 acres of land in the surrounding area will exacerbate the flooding risks to the surrounding community and the direct abutters.
- **Housing Density:** MassHousing guidelines indicate that appropriate density for a development of this nature is 8 units per acre. The proposed development far exceeds this guideline at 20 units per acre. Additionally, this level of density is completely inconsistent with the density of the surrounding Stoneham neighborhood and community. Rather, it appears that this design mirrors a similar design in Lynnfield, demonstrating the developer's apparent lack of interest in promoting and accommodating the local community character.
- **Traffic Concerns:** Franklin Street is a heavily traveled road that is home to local businesses, the main entrance to the Boys and Girls Club of Stoneham, Stoneham High School, condominiums and many residential areas. It features heavy traffic during peak times of day, but also shows consistent use at other times. Franklin Street is inadequate to support the increased vehicular traffic that would be caused by such a large influx of new residents. The Town only recently

rejected the construction of a public school not far from the locus given Franklin Street's inadequate width, grade and construction.

- **Housing Requirements:** The Town of Stoneham has met its fair share obligation of affordable housing developments and continues to strive for additional affordable housing construction consistent with the Town's long term goals and needs. The proposed project meets none of the Town's long term goals and needs.
- **Outreach to the Community:** The applicant has not fulfilled their responsibility to adequately engage with local officials or with the local community regarding the impact of this project. Specifically, the project applicant failed to meet with Town Officials or the Board of Selectmen prior to submitting its application to MassHousing. Additionally, during the recent public meeting in Stoneham, the developer declined through their attorney to answer several important questions relative to the impact of this proposed development on the community. For such a large, impactful development, it is imperative that the Town of Stoneham be full and active partners in this process.

I appreciate the need for and support the creation of more affordable housing in Massachusetts, but I have serious reservations about moving forward with this project as currently proposed. At a minimum, there should be extensive deliberation and community input into a project of this size before moving forward.

I appreciate your attention to this important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact my office should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jason Lewis". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Jason M. Lewis