



TOWN OF  
STONEHAM  
MASSACHUSETTS

TOWN HALL  
35 CENTRAL STREET  
STONEHAM, MA 02180

HISTORICAL COMMISSION

November 14, 2013

Board of Selectmen  
Town Hall  
35 Central Street  
Stoneham, MA 02180

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

Dear Board Members:

The Stoneham Historical Commission (SHC) thanks you for the opportunity to comment on the Project Eligibility Application of October 2, 2013 submitted for the project known as "The Commons at Weiss Farm". The SHC is a local board appointed by you under M.G.L. Chapter 40, Section 8D. We are charged with the preservation, protection and development of historic and archeological assets in our town.

We have prepared the following response describing our concerns about the project along with an approach toward resolving them.

We find the current early stage design concept of the 3 (three) large scale, five story buildings to be out of character in design, scale, and materials of the homes in the neighborhood..

Two local apartment properties, Saugus Commons and Beverly Commons demonstrate that John M. Corcoran and Company has the expertise to design units that fit in a small town atmosphere and are sensitive to the neighborhoods in which they are located.

In their web page advertisement for Beverly Commons Corcoran and Company state: "You'll experience colonial style apartment home living that reflects a traditional Williamsburg style of architecture." Similarly their reference to Saugus Commons reads, "Lush landscaping, colonial architecture, and a quaint community atmosphere make up Saugus Commons....apartment homes situated in three-story buildings"

This emphasis on traditional colonial design would be more in keeping with the character of the existing neighborhood of single family homes.

Additionally, we respectfully request that the clubhouse, signage, and any common spaces be redesigned to be in keeping with the ca. 1749 farmhouse of Elisha Knight, yeoman farmer who

supported his family from this land. This would be a perfect opportunity to celebrate the history of this property beyond retaining the name of the Weiss family who have owned and worked the land since 1928.

While we are saddened by the loss of 24+ acres of open space, we request that its new use for apartment housing be harmonious with and enhance the surrounding neighborhood character. To that end, the SHC recommends:

1. that the Selectmen request John M. Corcoran and Company initiate an inclusive and participatory design process that will address citizen design concerns,
2. that Selectmen appoint key stakeholders from the neighborhood and community at large to participate in the design development process with John M. Corcoran and Company. Any necessary professional expertise (architects, LEED specialists, etc) could be funded from the \$250,000 earmarked for the "development of residential dwelling units at 170 Franklin Street."

The SHC would welcome an opportunity to collaborate in such an initiative.

Below are links to the properties referenced above:

<http://corcoranapts.com/communities/massachusetts/beverly/beverly-commons>

<http://corcoranapts.com/communities/massachusetts/saugus/saugus-commons>

Thank you for your time and consideration



Margaret O. Warren  
Co-Chair



Marcia M. Wengen  
Co-Chair

CC: MassHousing ATTN: Katherine Lacy, AICP, One Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108  
John M. Corcoran and Company, 1 Grandview Road, Braintree, MA 02184