



January 11, 2024

Scott Weiss  
The Gutierrez Company  
200 Summit Drive  
Burlington, MA 01803

RE: Recommendations for *The Residences at Spot Pond* Development

Dear Mr. Weiss,

Friends of the Fells has analyzed the development plan for the 40B multi-family housing project, *The Residences at Spot Pond*, and seeks to work with the Gutierrez Company and other stakeholders to improve the plan via the integration of new features and modifications, and consideration of measures to protect important features within the Fells.

We believe the final project design should comprehensively take into consideration the site as an “inholding” of the Fells, and consider modifications that would both safeguard the natural resources of the Fells, and also provide new amenities that would allow current and future residents, and the general public, to sustainably enjoy and care for the park.

Below are recommendations we would like to explore with your company:

- We recommend that the Gutierrez Company work directly with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to plan and construct a publicly accessible trail head within the project boundaries to provide safe access to the Fells to new and existing residents, and to promote sustainable use of the Fells. The trail head should include amenities such as ADA compliant public parking spaces, trash receptacles serviced by property management, and an informational kiosk.
- We recommend that the Gutierrez Company work with DCR, Friends of the Fells, and other stakeholders to thoughtfully consider the interface between the Fells forest land and the project area. For instance, the property boundary’s fencing should be improved and maintained to protect the Fells from the creation of multiple “social” unauthorized trails, which can fragment habitat and cause erosion. Also, an increased buffer between the development footprint and the property boundary would provide options for natural infrastructure (rain gardens, swales) to filter run-off, control erosion, and increase overall natural green space within the project boundary.
- We recommend that the parking space requirement (1.7x per unit) be negotiated to a lower number to accommodate some of the recommendations outlined in this document.

- We understand that the increase in parking and traffic from the current density of the project (378 units) will require a permit from DCR (302 CMR 11.00) and review under MEPA (301 CMR 11.00). We recommend that the scope of the review conducted by MEPA and DCR include the character of Woodland Road and intersections in adjacent communities (Medford, Melrose) to analyze the regional impact of the proposed density. If significant impacts are found, we recommend lowering the density of the project to address these impacts.
- We recommend modifications to Woodland Road to improve pedestrian and bike safety and access to and from the project site and the Fells generally, and to mitigate potential traffic impacts. We recommend that mitigation measures agreed to as a part of this project should generally follow and support the vision for Woodland Road as conceived in the [Spot Pond Circumferential Trail Study](#). Elements to consider include traffic circles, bike lanes, sidewalks, and a pedestrian crosswalk with signals. We recommend that significant public outreach via multiple public hearings/design charrettes be developed to receive public input on proposed modifications to this historic parkway.
- We recommend using only responsibly sourced native plants in landscaping, and that rules be put into place to prevent ongoing landscaping and maintenance from impacting the surrounding forest (e.g., prohibiting the storage or disposal of green waste on-site or into the forest, limiting use of fertilizers and pesticides, and invasive plant management).
- We recommend that no anticoagulant rodenticide be used in the demolition and construction phases of this project, as well as post-construction ongoing operation and maintenance, to protect wildlife from secondary exposure (particularly raptors that feed on and control rodent populations).
- We recommend developing a lighting plan to minimize light impacts to wildlife in the surrounding forest land.
- We recommend that at least one indoor meeting space be included in the development plan to be used by community groups.

**About the Fells:** The Fells is a significant public recreational resource, a fragile and diverse ecosystem with a critical role in conservation, and host to multiple important regional water resources. It includes many unique and sensitive natural plant communities and is home to state-listed endangered species. It is a destination for walking, hiking, biking, dog walking, fishing, kayaking, and more, and provides enriching outdoor experiences to thousands of visitors every month. It stores significant amounts of carbon, absorbs runoff from heavy rains, and supports critical pollinator species like butterflies and bees. The Friends of the Fells is committed to preserving the Fells in all of these roles through cooperation with partners and stakeholders.

Sincerely,



Chris Redfern  
Executive Director  
Friends of the Middlesex Fells Reservation  
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CC: Stoneham Board of Appeals, via Maria Sagarino