



TOWN OF
STONEHAM
MASSACHUSETTS 02180

Planning & Community Development Department
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January 17, 2024

Stoneham Board of Appeal
c/o Maria Sagarino, Town Clerk
Town Hall, 35 Central Street
Stoneham, MA 02180

Re: Residences at Spot Pond, 5 Woodland Road (Comprehensive Permit Application)

Dear Stoneham Board of Appeal:

The Planning & Community Development Department has independently reviewed the comprehensive permit application packet for 5 Woodland Road. The proposal calls for the construction of 378 units of rental housing on approximately 10.2 acres of land at 5 Woodland Road. Although only 95 of the units will be affordable, all 378 units will be included on Stoneham's Subsidized Housing Inventory if the project is approved.

The Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) is used to measure a community's stock of low- or moderate-income housing for the purposes of MGL Chapter 40B, the Comprehensive Permit Law. About 4.91% of all housing units in Stoneham are on the state's SHI, and available for low-income residents. This is a smaller supply than the 10% goal set by the state and fewer units than the number of local households in need. Below is a high level analysis of Stoneham's SHI with respect to this proposal as of January 2024:

Estimated Year Round Housing Units (Census 2020)	10,130
Total 10% target of affordable units	1,013
Percentage of residents who qualify for affordable housing (based on the 2020 Stoneham Housing Production Plan, page 14)	39.0%
Stoneham's total SHI units	497
Stoneham's percentage subsidized	4.91%
Weiss Farm approved units	259
Needed minimum units for the 10% target	277
Proposed (Residences at Spot Pond/RSP)	378
If RSP approved, Stoneham's total affordable units on SHI	1,134
If RSP approved, Stoneham's percentage	11.20%



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For context, this property is located within the Medical/Office/Residential District, an area zoned to provide an area for medical and related services, general office, technological, research, and multi-family residential uses. Access into the site is by an existing site circular roadway known as Executive Drive, a neighborhood with an existing senior care center, medical office facility, and 309 housing units. The MBTA Route 99 bus begins its route at nearby 3 Woodland Road and connects to Malden Center where riders can connect to various regional bus routes, commuter rail, and the Orange Line to reach their final destination. Furthermore, the Town's Housing Production Plan, which was approved by the State in 2020, identified this property as highly suitable for future housing. As the housing stock in Stoneham continues to grow, it is critical that the community continues to add affordable units and reach safe harbor status while addressing the gap between available subsidized housing and qualifying residents in town.

After reviewing the comprehensive permit packet for the Residences at Spot Pond at 5 Woodland Road, the department's comments are as follows:

Covenant Document – A memorandum of agreement between Fellsway Development LLC and the Town of Stoneham was dually signed and stamped at the Stoneham Town Clerk's Office on December 5, 2023. This department's previous comments in response to project eligibility on this restriction has been resolved.

Traffic – The applicant has provided sufficient data through their Traffic Impact Assessment by Langan Engineering & Environmental Services to assess potential traffic impacts for this project. The assessment was conducted in accordance with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Transportation Impact Assessment Guidelines and has demonstrated that the existing roadway infrastructure is adequate to accommodate the traffic expected to be generated by the proposed development. Further, this study concludes that the development of this project at this location will not result in significant changes in traffic flow or diminish safety within the study area.

Existing MBTA Route 99 Bus Stop – This project may create interruptions and confusion of the MBTA Route 99 bus route for the area. The MBTA Route 99 is an important public transportation option for residents, employees, and visitors to access the Executive Drive and Middlesex Fells area. There have been preliminary discussions between the Town, MBTA, and the applicant, and these conversations should continue to ensure safe access for ridership during demolition, construction, and occupancy. Additionally, the project proponent should work with the MBTA to establish appropriate ridership accommodations like a well-lit, accessible bus shelter once the bus stop has been relocated to an approved location. Other improvements such



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as additional crosswalks and tactile panels may be necessary as part of these accommodations and should be allowed to be added if this project is approved.

Environmental Impact – The applicant has submitted an Environmental Impact Assessment for this proposal from Goddard Consulting Strategic Wetland Permitting. This report concluded that the proposed development project does not impact any important habitat features or water resources on-site as the project is almost entirely within the existing disturbed area. Additionally, the submitted sheets L-101, L-501, and L-502 of the site development plans detail that all proposed plant species are native species or native cultivar based on the planting schedule. The applicant should meet with the Stoneham Stormwater Board and provide a report to the Board of Appeal to ensure clean stormwater in the town and a cleaner environment as a whole for our future.

Waiver Requests – The petitioner has submitted a list of three waivers for consideration through the comprehensive permit process. It is my opinion that all three waivers are reasonable and can be granted if the Board of Appeal concludes that as well. One optional waiver will be detailed in the parking section below.

Parking – Per Section 6.3 of the Stoneham Zoning Bylaws, the parking requirement for a residential use greater than a two family is 1.7 spaces per dwelling unit. The total off-street parking requirement for this proposal is 643 spaces. The applicant has provided a total of 679 total spaces as detailed on page C-103 of the submitted site development plan. Whereas the property is accessible by public transportation and there is additional available street parking on Executive Drive, I recommend that the Board of Appeal consider an additional waiver to lower the parking requirement for the project. Below is a breakdown of the number of spaces required per unit and what the parking minimum would be on a 378 unit project:

1.5 spaces per unit	567
1.6 spaces per unit	605
1.7 spaces per unit	643
1.8 spaces per unit	680

There is an opportunity to eliminate the 82 stall parking lot on the southeasterly part of the plan and maintain the existing green space by granting a lower parking waiver. By eliminating those 82 spaces, the project will still be providing 597 parking spaces for the project which is eight spaces away from a 1.6 spaces per unit requirement. It is my opinion that granting this type of



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waiver is in harmony with the objectives of the off-street parking requirement in the Town Code as well as better for the neighborhood as a whole.

Local Preference – Although mentioned in the newly signed Memorandum of Agreement, I think it's important to highlight the petitioner's commitment to provide a local preference for the affordable residential units in the project. According to the 2010-2014 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data, in Stoneham, cost burden is high among all household types. About 69% of low-income renters and owners in Stoneham are cost-burdened, spending over 30% of their income on housing. Elderly family and non-family households experience a higher rate of cost burden: about 45% of family households and 57% of non-family households with someone over the age of 62 are cost burdened. Overall, the data on households in Stoneham show that residents pay more than they can afford on housing and there is not enough affordable housing units available for eligible households in town. By having a local preference, Stoneham residents, employees of a Stoneham employer and households with children attending Stoneham Public Schools will have additional opportunities to stay in Stoneham through the newly provided affordable units.

Connectivity to the Middlesex Fells – Although this property does not directly abut the Middlesex Fells, the petitioner should be mindful of its potential future residents' interest in this treasured public resource. To the extent possible, the petitioner should work in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Town of Stoneham on supporting the project goals within the 2023 Spot Pond Circumferential Trail Study and overall safe access for residents to the Middlesex Fells.

Connectivity to other areas of Stoneham – As highlighted above, the MBTA Route 99 bus is a significant asset to the Executive Drive area. Currently, this route begins at 3 Woodland Road and departs out of Stoneham toward Malden. Although valuable to those wishing to commute south, there is no existing shared transportation option for this area into other parts of Stoneham. Shared mobility users pursue economic opportunities around town, and community residents breathe cleaner air. There is a recognized need for more physically accessible, convenient transportation options to get around within Stoneham as well as to longer-distance medical appointments and the public transportation network. The Town is launching a three-year shuttle pilot later in 2024 with funding from the Boston MPO. This shuttle would address a long-standing disparity that will benefit the local work force as well as riders of all ages looking to share mobility to their final destination or to connect to existing public transportation opportunities. The applicant should consider joining the town's efforts with this pilot and other



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future transportation opportunities to further finding mobility options to better connect residents throughout town.

Other Considerations – There are other aspects such as appropriate lighting, site control, trash removal, utility connections, and appropriate address selection for the project that need to be considered as part of this process. However, I will yield to other department heads to provide their vast expertise on those facets of the project submission.

I appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on the application submission. If there are any questions or comments on this communication, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Erin Wortman
Director of Planning & Community Development

CC: Dennis Sheehan, Town Administrator