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STONEHAM
BOARD OF APPEALS

To: Stoneham Zoning Board Members

We Sterling Hill abutters bought our condominiums five-and-one-half years ago with the understanding that Alta Clara's 261 apartments would be the final residential development in this space. Yet today we are facing a gigantic residential project that is larger than any of the twenty-six developments cited in the Comprehensive Permit Site Approval application. It is larger than developments currently completed, under construction, or going through the permitting process for 40 B housing. The largest development mentioned is three hundred units and many are substantially smaller.

We understand that these apartment buildings will be an aesthetic improvement over the decaying BRMC that we have looked upon for five years, and that it will be very expensive to take down, but it is just too huge a development for this site! The demolition cost should not justify the size of this project. We would ask why the Weiss Farm development which has more than twice the acreage, roughly 27 acres to 10 acres, will only have 259 units?

The area in question is jokingly referred to as a "wasteland" by many locals because there isn't so much as a coffee shop within reasonable walking distance. This is not an issue for those of us who actively sought a quiet natural setting within the beautiful Fells. However, it must be recognized that every need, be it for a cup of coffee, groceries, medicine, or a haircut, requires egress onto and ingress from Woodland Road.

Woodland is a narrow curving road with traffic entering and exiting at its two circles which are used for access to and from, either Pond Street or Ravine Road. At peak times cars stack up to make the turns into these rotaries, or into Executive Drive further narrowing Woodland Road for through traffic. Access to Executive Drive from the north, by either of its entrances, requires crossing two lanes of traffic.

This same road is the only access to routes 93 and 128! At its northern end, the intersection on Route 28, traffic is often backed up for over a half mile. At the southern terminus, by the Flynn Skating Rink, cars exit onto Elm Street and are similarly backed up attempting to get to Route 93. At present there are hundreds of vehicles using Executive Drive: workers and visitors to the Life Care Center, doctors, staff and patients to the Medical

Arts Building, residents of the Sterling Hill's forty-eight condominiums and residents of the 261 units at Alta Clara! When one considers the delivery vehicles and trash haulers necessary to keep these places functioning, and the added impact of 378 additional units, it is a recipe for disaster. Frankly, we are amazed that the Massachusetts Housing Authority would deem this an appropriate site for mixed family housing on this scale.

We have a genuine concern about the deleterious effects these numbers of people and vehicles will have on Stoneham's most precious natural resource - the Fells and its green space! To claim a project of this scope is environmentally responsible is absurd. At a time in history when all of us should take our stewardship of green space very seriously, this project's scope is an abdication of that responsibility. The area's natural beauty and resources will be polluted by oversaturation and population density.

We have looked at the plans included with the permit application, and we have many questions and concerns:

1. Why is this project so much larger than the others mentioned? (on the Allen & Majors and Cube 3 project lists, as well as on the 40 B reference page?)
2. Why are 751 parking spaces intended for these apartments, when the required number is 643? This represents over one hundred additional spaces when already there are variances being requested which will significantly reduce the present green space, creating even more of an asphalt desert.
3. Why do the colorful conceptual renderings indicate green space when the single largest green, the front lawn of our condominium community, is earmarked for an eighty-two-car parking lot? This green is where we, as well as the residents of Alta Clara, play with our grandchildren, build snowmen and kick soccer balls!
4. Why don't the plans include any provision for pets? Alta Clara has a dedicated dog park on their property for the hundred plus dogs that reside in those 261 units. Where will these new residents walk their pets? Will they add to the waste left by irresponsible owners on the walking trails of the Fells? And how will they even get to these trails without trespassing on our property or Alta Clara's? Making no provision for pets is indiscriminately irresponsible planning.
5. We are concerned about the numerous misrepresentations in this project's description. At best many references are inaccurate and, we hope, not intentionally disingenuous! For example, page 4 of the application

mentions " immediate access to athletic fields, 100 miles of trails, an observation tower" and more. There are no athletic fields - there is an open grassy space opposite the zoo – about a mile away. The observation tower is in the Medford woods and requires crossing routes 28 and 93.

Similarly, the Figure 4 mention of surrounding land use and local amenities is misleading. The beach mentioned is a private pond open to Medford residents only; the school is small, private, and pricey; the shopping center mentioned is over a mile away; the dog park indicated is in the Sheepfold, on the southbound side of Route 93. We can't help but wonder if any of this information was vetted for accuracy by Massachusetts Housing officials before it was sanctioned for inclusion in the application.

We recognize that a housing crisis exists in our state. We also recognize that Stoneham must do its part in finding more appropriate sites. Locating such a massive project on the insular acreage of the former BRMC is not appropriate. These apartments will be too remote from all those amenities that enrich people's lives and getting to the most basic needs will create traffic nightmares as well as negatively impacting the natural environment.

As Stoneham's leaders and leaders of the Commonwealth, you are charged with being the guardians of land, space, and the quality of life of all the citizens you represent. That is the job we expect you to do. Please consider what is truly in the town's best interest and limit the scope of this project.

Despite the disappointment caused by broken promises and feeling betrayed, we recognize the need for housing. A development of one-half to two-thirds the scale of that proposed would be much more likely to be well received, and with a few accommodations even welcomed!

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