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TO: David Ragucci  
Town Administrator

FROM: Chief James McIntyre

DATE: December 6, 2013

SUBJECT: The Commons at Weiss Farm

On behalf of the Stoneham Police Department, I would like to offer some concerns on the proposed "The Commons at Weiss Farm" project. With the limited information that has been provided to the Town, this three building project will consist of 264 rental units located at 170 Franklin Street. Access to the site will be through a driveway, located to the west of the existing Weiss Farm driveway. It is unclear what, if any, traffic control devices or designs are being proposed by the developer in order to mitigate traffic safety concerns.

Within a quarter-mile of this proposed project are three existing apartment complexes, Stoneham High School, an assisted living care center currently under construction, and a child care facility. Franklin Street is also used as a means of access for the Colonial Park School, located in an adjacent neighborhood.

As you are aware, Franklin Street is a public way with significant vehicular traffic. As noted in the April 11, 2011 Nitsch Engineering report to Tappe Associates on the proposal to relocate the Stoneham Middle School to Stoneham High School campus at 149 Franklin Street - "Franklin Street runs in the east/west direction and connects Main Street in Stoneham (Route 28) to Main Street in Melrose. Main Street in Stoneham (Route 28), Franklin Street, and Main Street in Melrose are all Urban Principal Arterials. This means that they are all high volume roadways that serve critical paths in the transportation network. However Franklin Street is used more for through traffic, while Main Street (Route 28) contains a high number of local business, so traffic in that area drives more slowly, and is generally more congested."

Further, the report noted that "there is significant queuing during the afternoon drop off period internal to the site (Stoneham High School), as well as the lanes turning in from Franklin Street which backs up significantly during the peak hours and blocks through traffic on Franklin Street. The addition of a new middle school on the campus will exacerbate this problem." It is my

understanding that the traffic impact on Franklin Street was a significant reason for the new middle school not being built at the 149 Franklin Street location.

As part of the site plan process for the building of a Dunkin Donuts at 128 Franklin Street, traffic studies were conducted by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. During their traffic studies, the average traffic count on Franklin Street was 17,700 (2003) and 20,400 (2004) vehicles per day. The traffic survey estimated that there would be a total of 360 vehicle trips (180 entering/180 exiting) during the morning commute and 220 vehicle trips (110 entering/110 exiting) during the evening commute. The location of the Dunkin Donuts – the intersection of Franklin Street and Stevens Street – and its impact on vehicular traffic during the hours in which students were arriving and leaving school, necessitated for the placement of a Traffic Director (a civilian employee of the Police Department) at the intersection. The Traffic Director, whose annual salary is paid by Dunkin Donuts, assists motorists who are attempting to exit into traffic on Franklin Street from Stevens Street.

At the entrance to the *The Commons* project, Franklin Street has single east and westbound travel lanes. A vehicle traveling westbound will need to stop in the travel lane in order to wait to turn left into the complex. During commuting hours, the queuing of vehicles in the westbound travel lane can have a ripple effect along a significant portion of Franklin Street. Additional concerns with the location of the driveway include: a significant change in the grade of the westbound travel lane immediately before the entrance which hinders line of sight; a curve in the roadway that hinders the line of sight for eastbound travel; and it appears that there will be an incline in the driveway which may pose a challenge for vehicles attempting to gain wheel traction and exit onto Franklin Street during inclement weather.

The location of this Dunkin Donuts is within a quarter mile of the proposed *The Commons* project. Due to the high traffic volume during the morning and evening commute, I would anticipate that vehicles attempting to enter/exit into this *The Commons* would experience similar delays. Again, it is unclear what, if any, traffic control devices or designs are being proposed by the developer in order to mitigate traffic safety concerns.

In September 2008, the police department conducted a traffic survey in the area of 138 Franklin Street. During this seven day survey period, our records indicated that the average weekday traffic count for east and westbound traffic was 19,398.

In reviewing motor vehicle crashes that were noted in the Stoneham Police Departments dispatch records on Franklin Street, between Stevens Street and Rustic Road, the following results were found:

- 2010 – 14 reported crashes
- 2011 – 15 reported crashes
- 2012 – 13 reported crashes
- 2013 to date – 14 reported crashes

The crash locations were within one quarter mile of the proposed project location.

Lastly, the addition of several hundred new residents will only exacerbate the concerns over our police department's staffing levels. Our current staffing level of 36 officers, which was reduced from 38 in 2005, has the Town 9% below the FBI national average for communities our size at 1.8 officers per 1000 residents.

If you wish to discuss these concerns further, please contact me.