



December 2, 2019

Mark Regan, Rakei Meir and Kevin Sarney Members of the Winchester Zoning Board of Appeals

Dear Members of the Winchester Zoning Board of Appeals,

I am writing on behalf of the Network for Social Justice (NFSJ), formerly known as the Winchester Multicultural Network, an organization that for close to three decades has worked to advance an inclusive and equitable Winchester. To further these goals, we are working to structurally target issues at the intersection of class, race, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation, and immigration status in this town. Affordable housing, and specifically the opportunity to increase availability for more moderately priced rental units, is a cross-cutting issue which is at the core of making this community more inclusive and welcoming. This is why I am writing to you and why we will appear as representatives of the Network's Response and Advocacy Committee at the December 4 hearing.

As the ZBA knows, the minimum affordable housing target for all cities and towns in Massachusetts is 10% of the housing stock of that municipality. Winchester presently falls – and for many years has fallen - near the bottom of that list. Our current percentage stands at 1.9%.

In an effort to more rapidly achieve the 10% level as well as be able to have a degree of control over 40B developments, the Town this year received approval from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for a housing production plan. Under this plan, the town, based upon its total number of housing units, will need to produce 40 new units annually - or 79 new units over a two-year period - which are acceptable to DHCD in compliance with their income and other specific guidelines. Moreover, we are mandated under the HPP to continue to produce this number until we reach the 10% level.

Overwhelmingly, studies in Massachusetts have shown that 40B developments have actually had a positive impact on the communities in which they are situated. Benefits have included: an increase in the mix of age groups and the ethnic and racial diversity; the people in the town workforce able to live within the town they serve; and the elders able to remain in the town in which they have lived much or all of their adult lives.

The River Street Development now before the ZBA presents the potential of a 40B development which would remove warehouse buildings on this partly residential street and create a 147-unit residential building of all rental units with a mix of one, two- and three-bedroom units. Of the total, 110 would be market rate units and 37 would be affordable units in a mix of one, two- and three-bedroom sizes distributed throughout the complex. Under DHCD rules regarding 40B rental developments, all 147 units would be counted toward our inventory.

Why is the River Street Development by SEB is important to Winchester:

We have a **significant need** for more rental housing and particularly moderately priced rental housing in town to meet the needs of existing populations here.

Rental housing for aging populations:

~ Our resident population is aging and while some can afford to purchase high end condominiums in town, many – living on fixed incomes – cannot: while some may be able to afford market rate units, many need units with a rent that corresponds to their available income.

~ Some aging couples and singles wish to move to town to be near younger family members and they too need this combination of rental units available.

~ As people age, their needs can change suddenly due to fluctuations in health; thus, for seniors, a rental situation needs to be much more flexible, and rentals are often a more appropriate option than a condo setting.

Converting town workforce commuters into town residents:

~ We have many town employees – whether police, fire, teachers, or support staff - more of whom may be able to live in town were we to have more affordable units available. Most of the employees of our largest employer in town – Winchester Hospital – must live outside of town; adding more rental units and affordable units would enable some of those employees to move into town.

~ The price of housing in greater Boston has increased so much that singles, couples, and families who might once have been able to purchase a small house or even two-family home as a first-time homebuyer can no longer do so, as their housing costs are well over the 30% level - the amount projected as the ideal maximum income percentage to attribute to monthly housing costs. Some of these younger singles and couples may find rental opportunities a much better option for a longer period of time; some may also qualify for affordable units in River Street.

Broader positive impact of 19-35 River Street for this community:

~ Gradually opening Winchester up: mitigating the “economically gated reality” of this community. From the early 1900’s through the 1960’s, Winchester had a considerably more diverse economic makeup of residents, an attribute which has been stifled over the last four decades due to our rising housing costs.

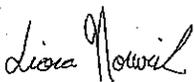
~ Meeting our recently adopted HPP goals: To “make good” on our desire to meet our HPP goals as defined by the state, we must manage to offer approximately 40 more affordable units annually in town until we reach the 10% required by law which we have long lagged far behind. It is only through developments such as River Street that we have any hope of achieving this result.

~ Increasing multifamily dwelling in Winchester as a way to create opportunity for families to enter an expensive market by renting. Multifamily dwellings in Winchester can, in turn, permit more rental options to both residents and non-residents.

~ Supporting the 19-35 River Street Development as a way to slightly reduce restrictive municipal zoning. Winchester, as is true in many suburban communities, has zoning which restricts multifamily dwellings to just a few areas in the town. Winchester’s predominant zoning pattern excludes multifamily homes and only permits single family homes on variously sized lots. This is effectively “exclusionary zoning” which puts a cost premium on any single-family ownership – or rental – and impacts most severely those for whom other options might not be feasible. At present, as our current zoning has this effect generally, it is only the 40B and friendly 40B developments which give the opportunities for more dense developments in different locations in town.

In keeping with the NFSJ mission and principles, we are strongly in support of the ZBA ruling favorably on the 19-35 River Street Development.

Sincerely yours,



Liora Norwich, Executive Director
Network for Social Justice

SUBSIDIZED HOUSING INVENTORY DATA – [attachment #2 - WFSJ LR]

All Columns below except Column Two are Data excerpts copied directly from
Department of Housing and Community Development Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI)
as of September 14, 2017

The original DHCD headings have been expanded to be more understandable to the reader.

The total square miles (first column) column has been added for additional comparison.

LOCAL NORTH AND WEST COMMUNITIES – GREATER BOSTON

There is a tendency for Winchester to think of itself as “such a small town” that “it is not surprising” that its number of Subsidized Housing Units is so low. However, this table makes clear that of 11 towns north and west of Boston, there are 4 communities with total land size smaller than Winchester which all have a greater percentage of SH Units, and two which are marginally larger in land size with **substantially** more SH Units. **We are beyond the realm of excuses**; it is time as a Town we support developments with substantial Subsidized Housing Units in order to meet our Housing Production Plan goals.

Column One Community Name Town or City	Column Two Total Square Miles of City or Town	Column Three 2010 Census Year Total Housing Units in Community	Column Four Total Development Units	Column Five Of the Total Development Units (Col. 4), are the number of units accepted by DHCD as Subsidized Housing Units	Column Six This data shows the Percentage of total SHI units out of the total number of Housing Units in the Community
Belmont	4.7	10,117	675	365	3.6%
Melrose	4.8	11,714	1,425	932	8.0%
Watertown	4.11	15,521	1,745	1,072	6.9%
Arlington	5.5	19,881	1,429	1,121	5.6%
Winchester	6.3	7,920	292	244	3.1%*/1.9%*
Stoneham	6.7	9,399	501	495	5.3%
Brookline	6.8	26,201	3,151	2,454	9.4%
Cambridge	7.1	46,690	7,102	6,911	14.8%
Wakefield	7.5	10,459	1,276	758	7.2%
Medford	8.1	23,968	2,243	1,694	7.1%

*3.1% figure was while Winchester North Development figures were included; as that development has not been commenced and is still on appeal by neighbors, it has been so long that it can no longer, per DHCD rules, be included in Winchester inventory; so our true 2019 number is actually 1.9%.

SUBSIDIZED HOUSING INVENTORY DATA – [attachment #1 – WFSJ LR]

All Columns below except Column Two are Data copied directly from
Department of Housing and Community Development Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI)
as of September 14, 2017; only nearby cities and towns included here.

The DHCD headings have been expanded to be more understandable to the reader.

The total square miles (Column Two) has been included for further comparison.

LOCAL NORTH AND WEST COMMUNITIES – GREATER BOSTON

Column One	Column Two	Column Three	Column Four	Column Five	Column Six
Community Name Town or City	Total Square Miles of City or Town	2010 Census Year Total Housing Units in Community	Total Development Units	Of the Total Development Units (Col. 4), are the number of units accepted by DHCD as Subsidized Housing Units	This data shows the Percentage of total SHI units out of the total number of Housing Units in the Community
Arlington	5.5	19,881	1,429	1,121	5.6%
Bedford	13.9	5,322	1,174	972	18.3%
Belmont	4.7	10,117	675	365	3.6%
Brookline	6.8	26,201	3,151	2,454	9.4%
Burlington	11.9	9,627	1,707	1,283	13.3%
Cambridge	7.1	46,690	7,102	6,911	14.8%
Carlisle	15.5	1,740	57	51	2.9%
Concord	25.9	6,852	926	804	11.7%
Lexington	16.5	11,946	1,500	1,321	11.1%
Lincoln	15.0	2,153	310	238	11.2%
Medford	8.1	23,968	2,243	1,694	7.1%
Melrose	4.8	11,714	1,425	932	8.0%
Needham	12.7	11,047	1,503	1,397	12.6%
Newton	18.2	32,346	2,543	2,425	7.5%
Reading	9.9	9,584	1,341	831	8.7%
Somerville	4.2	33,632	3,278	3,250	9.7%
Stoneham	6.7	9,399	501	495	5.3%
Sudbury	24.6	5,921	887	669	11.3%
Wakefield	7.5	10,459	1,276	758	7.2%
Watertown	4.11	15,521	1,745	1,072	6.9%
Wayland	15.9	4,957	370	254	5.1%
Wellesley	10.49	9,090	663	573	6.3%
Weston	17.3	3,952	285	167	4.2%
Winchester	6.3	7,920	292	244	[3.1%*]/1.9%*
Woburn	12.9	16,237	1,587	1,419	8.7%

*3.1% figure was while Winchester North Development figures were included; as that development is still on appeal by neighbors it has been so long that it can no longer, per DHCD rules, be included in Winchester inventory; so as of 2019 the true number for Winchester is actually 1.9%.