

Marty Jones
One Salisbury Street
Winchester, Massachusetts 01890

December 2, 2019

Zoning Board of Appeals
Town of Winchester
71 Mt Vernon Street
Winchester, MA 01890

RE: 19 - 35 River Street: Comprehensive Permit Application

Members of the Board:

I am writing to provide comments and to express my strong support for the Board's approval of the subject application.

I reside at 1 Salisbury Street and have been a Winchester resident since 1987 when my husband and I purchased our home. Since that time we have been privileged to raise our family here - our two daughters are proud graduates of Winchester High School, and we have enjoyed being able to take advantage of the many community resources our Town offers.

For over 40 years, my professional life has been in housing and economic development, working in the private, public, and non-profit sectors in the Commonwealth. My housing career has included working as a private developer of affordable and mixed income apartment communities with Massachusetts-based Corcoran Jennison Companies and, most recently, acting as the Interim CEO for Urban Edge, a nonprofit community development corporation in Boston. In economic development, I served for 6 years as the President and CEO of MassDevelopment, an economic development, quasi-public authority that uses a wide variety of financing and programmatic tools to promote private investment and economic growth throughout the Commonwealth.

In large part, as the result of the discussions about the last 40B application this Board considered, 416 Cambridge Street, I became interested in bringing my expertise closer to home and becoming more involved in housing issues in Winchester. I was honored to be appointed by the Town Moderator to serve on Winchester's Housing Partnership Board.

We are fortunate to live in Greater Boston, an area that is rich in educational and cultural institutions and that has a diverse, thriving economy - this is a region where companies and people **want** to be as evidenced by the continuing growth in jobs. For many years the pace of housing construction, not just in Winchester, but throughout the region has not kept up with the growing population and demand.

In greater Boston, numerous studies have documented the need for 90 - 100,000 units within the next decade. We all see the construction cranes in Cambridge, Somerville, and Boston and many people think that is solving the housing problem. In reality, it is not. Over the 3 year period 2015 through 2017, Boston permitted an average of 4433 new units a year, Somerville an average of 340 units, and Cambridge an average of 342 annually. These are large numbers, but it is clear that these communities alone cannot address the regional housing challenges.

Since we in Winchester benefit from this vibrant economy, we also need to take action to help accommodate the needs generated by the area's growth. Supporting and permitting multifamily housing developments like 19 - 35 River Street is an important step that this Board can help our community take. By doing so, we can address both our community's needs and those of the region.

As a resident, I have seen the impact of the escalating real estate prices on both for sale and rental properties in our community. It is clear to me that that it is virtually impossible for families without significant financial resources to live here, or to stay in Town as they age. This proposed development will help the Town take a much needed step to diversify its housing stock and provide rental housing resources which are currently lacking in Winchester. According to the Town's Housing Production Plan, 79% of the housing stock is comprised of single family homes and only 15% of all households live in rental housing. Teardowns of smaller multifamily structures, which have been predominantly replaced by larger more expensive single family homes, as well as condominium conversions have continued to deplete this limited supply of rental housing.

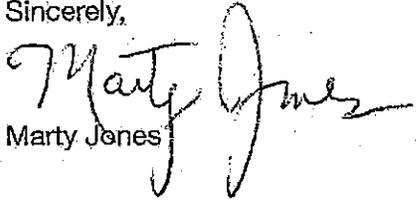
The variety of apartment sizes and configurations at 19 - 35 River Street will appeal to a range of renters. As mixed income housing, with 25% of the units priced to be affordable to households below 80% of median income, it will be possible for moderate income working families to secure quality housing in Town. This could include some of our own teachers, firefighters, employees in local businesses, and even some of my daughters' friends, now employed college graduates, who have few alternatives for housing in the town they grew up in.

From my perspective in the real estate business, the members of the development team, SLV River Street, LLC, have the track record and capabilities to build and operate the proposed development. They have assembled a high quality team and chosen a location that is appropriate for housing. As the demand for light industrial spaces has declined, this reuse will significantly improve the site and create a productive revenue-producing property. The scale of the building is well suited for the site, given the grade changes in the surrounding area. The design team has incorporated features such as a landscaped building entrance set back from street, open space on the top of the parking deck, variations to the form of the structure to relate to site dimensions and step backs at the 5th floor of the building, all of which enhance the building's appearance from a variety of vantage points.

As I noted nearly four years ago in testimony on 416 Cambridge Street, there is much to be proud of in Winchester. Our schools continue to provide top tier education, our Town government is professionally managed and our bonds consistently receive high ratings. Yet we are not making progress toward meeting our share of housing needed in the Commonwealth. Even counting the approved, but contested, 416 Cambridge Street development, Winchester ranks in the **bottom 30%** of towns in the Commonwealth when it comes to providing affordable housing. This development offers the opportunity for Winchester to demonstrate its commitment to changing that metric.

I urge the Board to approve this development as appropriate under the standards and provisions of Chapter 40B and as a positive addition to the Town of Winchester.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marty Jones". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

Marty Jones