

## Szekely, Brian

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**From:** Bill Cummings <bc@cummings.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, October 4, 2021 1:07 PM  
**To:** Szekely, Brian  
**Subject:** FW: Waterfield, Town of Winchester

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**Hello Brian - Sorry for the delay in getting this to you in the first place, and then with the edits in the first eight or so paragraphs below.**

**Thanks, See you later today. Bill Cummings**

October 4, 2021

Mr. Brian Szekely  
Town of Winchester  
Planning Board Office  
71 Mt. Vernon Street  
Winchester, MA 01890

Dear Mr. Szekely,

I am pleased to submit this report as per your request concerning the Waterfield Task Force **and the Town moving beyond the recent town-wide referendum opposing the earlier Town meeting vote.**

The five unpaid appointed members included two people who appeared to be fully supportive of the plan as it was originally approved by Town Meeting. Two other community volunteers appeared from the start to be searching for a new or improved contract. I was the fifth appointed volunteer but had not earlier even had any awareness of this project. All five appointed volunteers, **however**, at all times appeared to me to be fully supportive of the use of the lot as land for affordable housing.

Although I voted against it in the referendum, I did not contribute financially, and did not in any other way support the referendum activity. I **had very little** prior knowledge of the project. , but I did bring with me the benefit of more than 50 years in the construction and management of commercial real estate locally, including, including several large residential developments.

I have never conducted any meaningful business in Winchester, but I have served as a member and chair of the Winchester Planning Board and been a Town Meeting member. I spent most of my life building and operating Cummings Properties in Woburn. In recent years have spent most of my time building Cummings Foundation with my wife, Joyce Cummings.

Please consider the following thoughts for consideration as the Town attempts to negotiate appropriate changes with the Civico group or some other developer...

The task force considered the possibility that the developer might like to eliminate the underground spaces originally proposed and provide additional up-front cash to the Town in their place. There would also likely need to be additional monies from somewhere to fund enough further parking to accommodate more than the one half parking space per unit.

The so called “Aberjona parking area” would accommodate a single level parking deck above the existing spaces there. The new deck of 50 or 100 new elevated spaces should be tied in directly with the pedestrian access from the new station so that one elevator or ramp **on the northbound side of the tracks** would serve both needs.

And, especially if it is necessary to rebid this project, allowing a taller building can substantially decrease the project’s overall cost at no cost whatsoever for the Town. The aesthetics of Winchester Center will not be harmed one iota by permitting a six-story structure, with the building tucked in, and so totally obscured behind the elevated rail station.

Another totally wasted cost factor is the unneeded *retail* space called for in the original RFP. Having on-site retail uses that siphon apartment residents away from populating nearly existing shops is just non-sensical, and totally inappropriate.

The oft-cited primary reason for these new affordable units in the immediate downtown area is to accommodate older folks who no longer need or can no longer afford their single-family houses, but who also do not want to leave their Winchester hometown. It will hardly matter to most seniors if there is little or no play yard space for children.

In order to save considerable money for the developers, a change in the new structure’s height to permit a five-or six-story structure will make the building more attractive from both the building occupants’ and town-wide perspective. Eliminating completely the Chamber of Commerce building and all other retail space should also be carefully considered, as such space is absolutely not needed for this use in this location. Similarly, eliminating the three-bedroom apartments in favor of, perhaps, adding three or four affordable studios will improve the attractiveness of this vital new community centerpiece and possibly add more buildability.

It seems to some members of the Town-appointed task force, including me, that Winchester will have little if any chance of negotiating any meaningful changes to the earlier-proposed package if it negotiates only with the Civico entity. The task force learned from the well-informed town-employed or contracted professionals that there was little interest at this time in opening discussions with the second-ranked bidders because there would then not be enough time to do any meaningful negotiating before the deadline for the fall Town Meeting.

Rather than continuing to rush in with revisions to the existing failed agreement package, I strongly recommend that the package be re-bid with a number of changes that will preserve the essence of the affordable goals, with enough worthwhile cost reductions to make it an acceptably better deal for the whole town as well.

A slightly changed package that incorporates at least enough parking to forestall any compounding of the existing parking shortage seems to be the most essential element of any new agreement. Some even modest reduction in the lease term to 60 or 80 years would appear to be the next element to consider in my opinion.

Thank you for the opportunity to hopefully add value in Winchester.

Bill

Bill Cummings | Cummings Foundation

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