

**Lopez, Donna**

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**From:** Patrick W Barrett III [jbrealtyllc@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, September 22, 2014 12:15 PM  
**To:** City Council; Lopez, Donna  
**Subject:** RE: Policy Order Resolution "Planning Board & Art 19"

Dear Cambridge City Council,

I am writing to you regarding councilor Marc McGovern, Vice Mayor Benzan, and Mayor Maher's policy order regarding special permit review. As many of you know, several community groups, myself included, have been working on draft language that would amend sections of article 19 to foster better communication between neighborhoods and developers whose projects are subject to such review. We have been working on what I loosely call "community review." The issue, as councilor McGovern has rightly put it, comes down to timing and the process that makes meaningful neighborhood review of large projects nearly impossible. The good news is that we already use this type of review in certain areas of Cambridge; the Central Square Advisory Board and the East Cambridge Planning Team. Both of whom review large projects and offer recommendations that inform the planning board and help guide review. I would suggest that this is not enough and that we build off this type of process; adopting what many municipalities already do. We should have a review process that responds to each individual project that comes up under Art 19 and appoint boards comprised of abutters to foster understanding between the developer and residents and produce a substantive recommendation to the planning board to be incorporated into the process. I would note that many developers already engage in some form of neighborhood outreach; what some of are suggesting is to simply codify conduct the planning board already encourages.

The approach is balanced, takes very little resource to put together, and draws on an already active community that by all rights should have input in how this city grows. During the time of the Carlone Petition, I have heard several councilors, public commentators, and the planning board itself suggest that a neighborhood review process is something they too would welcome. Moreover the method suggested uses techniques already in place, used by this city, and many others in the commonwealth. The method isn't perfect, but at least there is a dialogue; structured and with purpose. Combine this with a substantive recommendation that planning board can incorporate into the development process and we can create a much more balanced review process for large article 19 projects without over burdening developer "soft costs" and giving the neighborhoods effected a much stronger voice in the process.

The goal should be not to stop development, but to understand the nature of the relief sought, and the nuisances of article 19 review, and foster a more robust and meaningful dialogue between the development community and their neighbors. Please support councilor McGovern, Vice Mayor Benzan, and Mayor Maher's policy order.

Regards,

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