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Comments to the Cambridge City Council on the 60-62 Magoun St curb cut

I will argue that this petition should be tabled, pending serious discussions with Fawcett on alternatives and the future of the Community Garden site.

What we really have here is a 3 acre parcel owned by Fawcett Oil (Tyler Court Realty Trust) with many points of access-- 5 curb cuts, although only 4 are approved for vehicular traffic. By zoning, even the most generous interpretation of the term 'frontage' would not allow for any additional cuts.

Yet this application is before you due to subdividing-- drawing a rectangle in an attempt to deliberately create a house lot with no access to a public way. I call this approach 'subdivide and conquer.'

The applicant is Tango Properties, LLC, which is to say it is Rob Fawcett Jr. This is the same entity that Fawcett Sr gave the Community Garden to, and from whom the City has been trying to purchase said Garden, thanks to this Council, but to no avail.

Developing on the Garden, in addition to being very much against what many people want-- another great North Cambridge institution lost, like the Deborah Mason School of Dance-- well, that would mean more curb cuts, more parking lost. This is in a neighborhood where many people do not have driveways, and where soon there will be increased pressure on parking due to overflow from and visitors to the large Fawcett apartment building.

Rob Jr cancelled his appearance at the neighborhood group at the last minute and hasn't rescheduled, so I am thankful to Councillor Kelley for exercising his Charter Right last week. It gave me a chance to actually open a dialog with Rob on this matter. On the phone, I explained our concerns over losing parking, and our desire to know what's up with the Garden. At the neighborhood meeting he missed, someone, I think Tom Flynn, presented the idea of using the big project's driveway for access. It is located right next to the lot in question.

Rob did not consider using the big project's driveway an option, and expected the Council to grant the curb cut immediately. He also said he's not ready to talk about his plans for the Garden right now.

The only thing we really could agree on is that we'd have to leave it to you to see where we go next. But at least a dialog is going on, and that's a dialog I hope to continue. By tabling this application, you acknowledge that we need to slow down and think carefully about the situation in this neighborhood.

I am thankful that curb cuts in Cambridge are not strictly a zoning matter as they are in some cities and towns. This affords an essential opportunity to consider some of the fuzzier human elements of living in tight quarters which are hard to codify. The Council can look at the big picture and not be fooled into looking at each phase of this piece-meal development of Fawcett's land holdings as an entity onto itself.

Please table this application, and leave it on the table until such time that we've talked with and made progress with Fawcett on our concerns.

Thank you for your consideration,

Mike Phillips