NANCY RYAN

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February 5, 2015

Dear Mayor Maher and Cambridge City Councilors,

We are writing to raise concerns about the proposed zoning changes to PUD-KS, the 14 acre Volpe parcel.

Throughout the draft zoning, the CDD proposal assumes that the draft K2 zoning is a good approach. However, like C2, K2 was never publically agreed to, nor was there real public discussion. So the city should not assume that K2 is a satisfactory basis for changing the zoning in the Volpe parcel. In general, we feel the zoning that resulted from the 2001 ECAPS plan is preferable to the proposed upzoning.

The ECAPS plan required that tall buildings up to 250' be located along the north side of Broadway, with the heights stepping down to 65' along Binney St. We think CDD's proposed height increases are far too high. The current Volpe building is 13 floors. The existing office buildings on Broadway going west toward Central Sq. and Inman Sq. range from about 4 to 9 floors. The housing on Third St. that is surrounded by the Volpe land is roughly 8 floors. Also, allowing 120' on the northwest corner makes it hard to have a public park there. Instead, there should be a height step down on the northern side of the parcel so that the south-facing Archstone apartments on Binney St. will be protected from new shadowing.

As members of the Planning Board said, any increased height should result in a lot more affordable housing than currently proposed; one Planning Board member said there should be 1/3 low/moderate housing, 1/3 middle-income housing, and 1/3 market housing. We propose the PUD as a total should result in affordable (under 80% of median income) housing that is at least 25% of the total Floor Area Ratio (FAR), and middle-income (80-120% of median income) housing that is at least 5% of the total FAR of the site. Affordable and middle-income housing should be mostly 2-3 BR units.

We also want the proportion of housing to office space to be higher than the proposed 40% housing. The planning study recently done by ECPT called for more housing, and the Area 4/Port Coalition stated its preference for more housing in response to the MIT upzoning. The federal building, retail, and innovation office space should not be exempt from the calculation of the housing to non-housing ratio. If all of the new Volpe building is excluded, that encourages a huge federal building AND other tall buildings, and less affordable housing and other desired benefits will result. Buildings should be broken up: we prefer no huge long buildings like those at Third St. and Potter St. As with MIT, there should be a low limit on the number of very tall buildings.

Our city remains without an overall goal for housing citywide that states how much of what kind is needed and where. So ideas about combos of middle-income housing and micro-units on this site are again being discussed in a vacuum. We have a housing problem that needs concrete goals so each piece fits into the larger puzzle. Even without an updated comprehensive plan for the city, we could have an updated housing plan. At the very least, we really need to know what the Nexus study on Inclusionary Zoning says, so that the affordable housing in the Volpe parcel at least meets the revised level of affordable housing.

Public open space is very important. Like ECPT (see their 1/21/15 letter) and the Area 4/Port Coalition (see their letter), we strongly do not want the public open space reduced from 7.5 acres to 2.5 acres as proposed- that would be unacceptable. This open space was promised in all of the earlier meetings to plan the sharply increased density of Kendall Sq. For this reason, <u>we are in strong support of Policy Order O-29</u> on the postponed February 2 agenda, which asks CDD to revise the proposed zoning for the Volpe site to include an option for a 7.5 acre public park as originally planned. Both new and old residents, along with people who work nearby, will benefit from a large public park near Kendall Sq.

"Publically beneficial open space" which is not fully usable by the public should not substitute for or count toward the open space. The public open space should be owned by the city, as required in current zoning. There should be strong rooftop noise mitigation, especially near the park and residential buildings.

As we have been saying, it is important to get community input on major proposed changes in zoning. We feel that CDD and Volpe/GSA officials should meet with the Area 4/Port Coalition, ECPT, NAEC and other neighborhood groups to get input on the draft zoning before submitting the draft zoning changes to the Planning Board.

The proposed community benefits of $10 SF (for new non-residential Ground Floor Area above base zoning limitations) are too small. MIT agreed to $10 + $4 SF ($4 went to non-profits; $10 went to transit and open space). Now that the Nexus study on the incentive rate has been received, we think commercial buildings on the Volpe site should pay a linkage fee of $24.30 per square foot, the amount the report says is necessary to provide the affordable housing that will be needed. As the Nexus study proposed, the fee should apply to the entire building, not just the amount above base zoning. Since the linkage fee may not be revised by the time CDD finalizes the Volpe zoning and brings it to City Council, the zoning should require that the combined linkage and community benefit fees at least equal $23.40 per square foot.

The community benefit funds should go to the three adjacent neighborhood groups who can give away the funds for projects; the funds should be proportionate to the population. If it is not possible for the funds to go directly to the neighborhood groups, non-profit organizations in Cambridge that serve residents in the three adjacent neighborhoods should be able to apply for the funds, which should not be mixed with the rest of city money.

If the community benefit funds are not changed as proposed above, the community benefit funds must be used for transit and for public open space, not for publically beneficial open space. The decision-making committee must include some representatives selected by neighborhood groups, not just any resident from a nearby neighborhood selected by the Manager.

Like the Area 4/Port Coalition, specific community benefits we would like are:

- 20 paid internships annually at the Volpe Center for Area 4 high school students; and

- Space within the area of the petition for up to 5 retail pushcarts operated by Area 4 residents, and a nearby place to store the pushcarts overnight;

We look forward to working with city staff and Volpe officials to develop good zoning and a good plan for the Volpe parcel of land.

Sincerely,

Cambridge Residents Alliance Executive Committee