

Drury, Margaret

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From: Harriet Ahouse [hahouse@alwayscharriet.com]
Sent: Thursday, June 11, 2009 4:39 PM
To: Drury, Margaret
Subject: FW: Zoning

11 June 2009

Cambridge City Council members:

During the past two and a half years I have been a faithful attending member of the City/Lesley/Community working group and have attended most of the public hearings as well. Am also a trustee of the Newport Condominium Trust and an on the Agassi Neighborhood Council. I am therefore very much up to speed on the issues and concerns. I am confident most of these will be resolved. For those few abutters who do not want the new construction, it will be difficult to completely please them. But I am sure if we all stay involved in the design process many of their concerns will be resolved. Issues of noise, lights, loading zones, and landscaping are all on the to-do watch list. It is my hope the Council accepts the recommendation of the Historical Commission: landmark the North Prospect Street Church, allow it to be moved and require the original steeple, or something very similar, to be restored.

In addition, I hope that the Council will accept the Zoning Overlay Proposal: require an open space park now on Roseland Street. Prior to building in the lot behind University Hall requires Lesley to have a community work shop, a public hearing and obtain a waiver from the council including building design, parking and open spaces. The community needs to be involved in this building process.

Henrietta Davis addressed several items at the end of the Ordinance Committee meeting on 27 May. These nine items are as follows:

1. Construction Mitigation
2. FAR (building density/height)
3. Setbacks
4. Open Space in the Sears rear lot
5. Parking - too much or too little - both experiences can be real at the same time

6. Limiting the danger of approving the rezoning and then no building being built (the economy, Harvard in Allston etc)
7. Handling zoning transitions - residential to commercial and back
8. Use of Sears rear lot
9. Lesley beautifying Mass. Ave central strip between Porter and Harvard Squares

My thoughts on these subjects..

- 1- Construction Mitigation: This is a conversation to be held within the working group. Until zoning and building designs are confirmed, construction mitigation is a bit premature. Many of us have several thoughts on how to control sound, dust, traffic flow and trucks. We all in the neighborhood want this to be a smooth controlled condition.
- 2- FAR: There is no question the idea of putting the AIB on the corner of Roseland and Massachusetts Avenue will result in a large, dense building. Having gotten Lesley to reduce the size of the buildings on the westerly side of the Avenue will help the feeling of density in the area. To reduce the zoning from 55 feet at grade to 45 feet at the sidewalk is a significant reduction in height along the Avenue, almost 15 feet.
- 3- Setbacks: I understand Oxford Court wanting to reduce the setback from their building. I do hope they understand what Lesley can build right now by right. No extra setbacks and a 55 foot build from grade, which is closer to 60 feet from the sidewalk. If Lesley is willing to set back from their building fine, but it should not be a jaw breaker.
- 4- Open Space: Many of us on the working group are eager to have better landscaping and open space along Roseland at the rear of University Hall. I am hoping at some point the city will allow for a few parking spaces be eliminated in order to design a small park now. Also the working group looks forward to working with the MBTA to open a path into the Subway station park from the parking lot behind the locksmith.
- 5- Parking: There will never be enough. I park in the Roseland/Prentiss/Oxford/Massachusetts quadrangle. There are always places to park for me and my friends. Newport Road, where I live, seldom has a parking space, but it is obvious why - 80 units and 13 spaces. Newport neighbors will always complain about parking if they demand it on their street. It is my Newport neighbors who are making the most noise about parking.
- 6- Danger of rezoning and no building due to finances: The city can negotiate details with Lesley to prevent financial future problems. I understand this was done in the Kendall Square area development.
- 7- Rezoning: When we live next to the main avenue of the city there are bound to be zoning changes. I understand the concern of neighbors whose views will change. So will mine. It has been nice having the trees and the openness. It will be much nicer to have the Avenue be a

vibrant active community.

8- University Hall (Sears) rear lot: I understand the concern about the lack of knowledge of the whats, whens, whys and wheres of this portion of the zoning change. The working group's greatest concern is the view from Frost Street. We are more concerned with the landscaping, a small open air park, a path through the parking lot to the back of the University Hall building and a path to the subway stop. We do not want the AIB hidden back there for no one to see. It should be an artistic building on the Avenue to compliment the art deco of the old Sears building and the 1870 church. Clearly if Lesley could put AIB in the back we would not have required all these hours of thought and planning. It is also my hope the city council put restrictions of this development.

9- Beautifying the Avenue: This has also been a conversation with the working group. We are concerned with more than a few trees and flowers, though they will be nice; we are most concerned with the financial viability of the Avenue. Several of us have contacted Councilman Sam Siedel, who is most interested in this issue also. I am hoping the city takes an active interest in the Avenue, especially from Harvard to Porter Square and beyond. A healthy avenue makes for healthy real estate and healthy taxes for the city!!

Harriet Ahouse

4 Newport Road

Unit 2

hahouse@alwaysharriet.com

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