



Lopez, Donna

From: NITA SEMBROWICH [sembro@verizon.net]
Sent: Thursday, August 02, 2012 1:01 PM
To: Davis, Henrietta
Cc: City Council; Lopez, Donna
Subject: RE: Still NO on Forest City

Dear Mayor Davis and Council,

I am writing to reaffirm my earlier opposition to Forest City's development petition. In my earlier email, I referred to the Council's long history of sneaking through important votes in summer session, when many residents are away or otherwise occupied, and of setting artificial, urgent deadlines forcing immediate decisions on significant issues that should ideally be made thoughtfully and with public input. This was BEFORE the unexpected postponement of the Forest City vote, and the abrupt inclusion of expiring-use housing as an incentive to approve the developers' petition as soon as possible. These represent the very tactics I was describing. I and many other long-term Cambridge citizens have encountered them before. This is not the way to run a democracy, nor does it result in a well-planned urban environment. These tactics alone would be enough to set me against the development petition. Such a vote should not be taken in summer session, in dead of winter just before Christmas, or at a special meeting called unexpectedly during a time when numerous residents are out of town, as has been done on too many other occasions in the past. Whatever the motivation behind them, such maneuvers are amazingly disrespectful of your constituents' schedules, lives, and opinions.

However, I also oppose the Forest City petition for all the other reasons I mentioned before. 1) The city, and/or Forest City, needs to have a credible plan in place to deal with the enormous potential added traffic this development could generate before it is even seriously considered. 2) Housing and retail needs would be better addressed in other ways, without the drawbacks attached to this proposal. 3) The fact that Forest City, which has had a long, contentious, and profitable history in Cambridge, has not met earlier housing obligations does not bode well for fulfillment of their current promises. Far from being an incentive to rush through their latest proposal, it is a good reason to be suspicious of it. 4) This kind of development sets a bad precedent for Central Square. Although in my lifetime Central Square has remained "gritty," it is modestly scaled. Many of us do not wish to see it transformed into a desert of skyscrapers and biotec labs. The high-end retail the developer is promising would be unlikely to succeed long-term in that location, providing them with a convenient excuse to convert the set-aside space to lab or office use in future—probably their plan all along. Again, we have seen this scenario before.

The extension of affordable status for 150 housing units is an important issue with major implications for the occupants of these units and the city as a whole. It is an issue that should be addressed separately, not tacked onto a new, large-scale development proposal at the last minute in the middle of summer. Affordable housing and expiring-use housing are problems the city should be working on in a more general, systematic, imaginative, and thoughtful way.

Thank you for your consideration. Again, I urge you to vote NO on this proposal. Forest City can always come back in the fall—not that I particularly want them to—but they can. If you approve their proposal, now or in the future, Cambridge residents will have to live with it and its consequences for the rest of their lives.

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From: Davis, Henrietta [mailto:hdavis@cambridgema.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, July 31, 2012 3:03 PM