

September 13, 2021

Leah B. Gibson, Chairwoman
Foxborough Board of Selectmen
40 South Street
Foxboro, MA 02035

Dear Chairwoman Gibson,

I would like to offer a few comments to the Board of Selectmen regarding the proposed project at 119 Morse St. I am confused about the “conceptual approval” the Planning Board was asked to offer as well as the “approval at a high level...in the clouds” that is before the BOS. I don’t think I am alone in that confusion. I still want to offer a few things I would like you to consider regarding the project.

Is there a need for this kind of housing?

- We have exceeded our 40b quota. There is no need. Maybe a desire by some, but not a “need”.
- There is no guarantee that any Foxboro Residents will live in this village.
- 62% of Foxboro residents surveyed say if nothing changes, they still have options to stay in town long term. I would like this to be 100% but I don’t think this warrant’s pulling the panic button. Other solutions have been suggested by our committees to help people stay in town.
- Our current zoning bylaws protect the character, vision, and wetlands of the town. Had this land been bought by a single family (there were several Foxboro residents interested), the landscape would not have been neglected as it is today.
- Housing markets fluctuate. A few years ago the town was riddled with for sale signs. With all the housing projects already in the pipeline, I think approving a project of this size is short sighted. You can never reclaim the quiet character of these struggling wetlands lost.
- We should be balancing the desires of potential residents with the desires of current taxpayers.
- “Increasing supply decreases demand thereby making all the homes in Foxboro more affordable” For my friends and neighbors that want to sell soon, how does a lowering home value this way benefit them?

Is this location appropriate for the project?

- The 3 most important criteria that the Foxboro Civic Engagement Focus Group identified in housing development were as follows:
 - Does not impact the quality and cost of municipal services: schools, public safety, etc
 - **Does not negatively impact wetlands, wildlife, and habitats**
 - Does not have an impact on traffic and congestion
- **Infrastructure:** The density poses the biggest threat to infrastructure. To put this in perspective, there would be as many multibedroom “units” on this 6 acres as there are houses on all of Morse St. We are essentially doubling the population of Morse St.

- **Wetlands and wildlife:** It's almost as though you couldn't find a less appropriate parcel in town if protecting wetlands is your priority. We should take care not to gloss over the rare turtle in this area or the effect this will have on the habitat and wetlands. In recent years a variety of wildlife has returned to this pond including a heron, cormorant, beaver, otters, owls, and rare turtles. The land is finally starting to heal. It is a shame to threaten that now. Our own Open Space and Rec plan states that, "a width of at least 200 to 500 feet is necessary to protect most bird and amphibian species". These buildings are 25 feet from the water's edge.
- **Traffic and congestion** is a challenge in this area and the roads are narrow with no sidewalks. It is difficult to take a left onto Cocasset from Morse or a left onto Cocasset from Oak safely. Spring St is narrow and serves as a cut through to 495/95. They have already born the traffic from the commuter lot and now the new development off Belcher Road.

How much of this project should be public and how much should be private?

Sadly from years of abuse, there are still significant environmental hazards tucked in these woods and threatening the groundwater. We need to be careful not to cause harm in encouraging public engagement in this area.

Is this project a solution to the problem for those residents who want to stay in town?

When seniors and young families express an interest to stay in Town, I think they mean the town they know, with its character and charm as opposed to a zip code. I do not think they are looking for a dense housing project so out of character to Foxboro. If it is the school system they want, know that adding 52 families will in turn increase demands on the Burrell School. If seniors imagine a closeness to uptown, know that they are in a remote area with no sidewalks.

Closing

I love this Town with its ponds and natural habitats. When our family chose this area a generation ago, we thought Foxboro shared our values. I think the residents of Foxboro still share these values. You see it in the Open Space survey where residents consistently ask for a category "leave open space as is" to be added. You see it in the findings of the Civic Engagement Focus Group which identifies protecting wetlands and wildlife as a top priority. You see it in our current zoning bylaws that prevent over development. So why has this agenda to provide 13 additional affordable housing units flown in the face of all these values?

Sincerely,

Kathy VandenBoom