



TOWN OF TOPSFIELD

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

8 West Common Street, Topsfield, Massachusetts 01983

Telephone: 978-887-1500; Fax 978-887-1502

www.topsfield-ma.gov

November 9, 2018

Mr. Michael Busby
40B Relationship Manager
MassHousing
One Beacon Street
Boston, Ma 02108

Re: Perkins Landing
Topsfield, Massachusetts
MH ID No. 1005

Dear Mr. Busby:

Kindly accept this correspondence and the accompanying documentation as the opinion of the Town of Topsfield in response to the MassHousing request for comment in its October 4, 2018 letter. Thank you for affording us this opportunity.

The Town of Topsfield continues our established commitment to fair housing and sustainable development. Notwithstanding that commitment, diligent review by our Planning Board, other relevant Town Departments, Committees and Officials and significant consistent commentary by residents have caused deep and far reaching concern for this Project. This proposes intensive development of an isolated, environmentally sensitive property. Further, it lacks any valid indicia of sustainability.

The Town unequivocally opposes the proposed Perkins Landing Project.

We respectfully offer for your consideration, the following:

- Two 40B projects currently exist in Town: Little Brook Village, an entirely affordable development undertaken pursuant to 40B by the Topsfield Housing Authority, and Amberwood, a Local Initiative Project developed in collaboration with a responsible developer. Affordable housing is available to disabled individuals in multiple group homes located in our residential neighborhoods. (Please see the Planning Board's description of Topsfield for details.)
- Town bylaws and rules and regulations clearly embody the principles of sustainable development, including real mixed-use districts and rigorous environmental regulations.

- As noted by the Planning Board and others, the site is inappropriate for such intensive development. It is an isolated, environmentally sensitive location that clearly lacks the ability to support this Project.
- This inappropriate site has engendered significant strong opposition from the "neighborhood".
- The Sustainability Report is inaccurate, almost in its entirety. It embodies minimal knowledge of the site and is inconsistent with other sections of the application.
- The application itself appears to be riddled with factual errors and internal contradictions. This raises concerns regarding the professionalism of the Applicant, and its apparent lack of the ability to exercise requisite care and attention to detail. The public record from the Applicant's Medfield project serves to validate these concerns.
- Similarly, financial information is inconsistent, which brings its credibility into question. Two different sets of prices appear in the Application. The market analyses compare the units in one case to a single property in Malden and in another, to Topsfield properties that are obviously not comparable. Lack of consistency, clarity and credibility in the financial documentation are likely to induce complex litigation.
- The Site control plan is inconsistent with the involved Purchase and Sale Agreement. Reduction in units would further complicate this. Proof of site control being a requisite for comprehensive permitting, this inconsistency is disconcerting and harkens to the likelihood of dispute and the probability of litigation.
- The Applicant's interaction with Town Committees and Officials has been disconcerting. The Board of Selectmen have yet to receive a request to meet the Applicant. Appearances by the Applicant at Planning Board Meetings have been unannounced, lacking the customary level of professionalism and communication.
- It is difficult not to envision that the Applicant is utilizing 40B to circumvent the intent of a judicial decision that rejected this site for development of a project for five houses.
- Creation of a site plan would be especially difficult, as the wetlands and river front area have not been delineated. Further, neither state-level guidelines including stormwater management, Massachusetts Department of Transportation roadway design, preservation of environmentally important sites or sustainable development principles have been addressed.

We understand and appreciate the commitment of Mass Housing to the creation of additional affordable housing. However, this proposed Project lacks the merits to proceed.


In summary we offer for your consideration these significant Project failures:

- This provides only seven affordable units, with twenty-one remaining at market rate.
- The sustainability is highly questionable and unconvincing in its ability to attain compliance with Massachusetts sustainability principles.
- Evidence of Project ability to comply with Massachusetts Department of Transportation required roadway design is lacking.

- Evidence of Project ability to comply with Massachusetts Stormwater management guidelines is also lacking.
- Massachusetts Fish and Wildlife preservation issues are highly likely to be present, as the proposed site has been recognized as a bio-retention area by the Commonwealth.

Thank you again for providing our Town with the opportunity to voice our substantial concerns with this Project.

Very Truly Yours,



Mark B. Lyons
Chair, Board of Selectmen