

Donna Rich

From: Jean-Marc Berteaux <jmberteaux@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, October 06, 2018 10:32 AM
To: Planning Department; 40B 01983
Subject: 64 Perkins Row comments
Attachments: 40B.docx

Dear Planning Board members and 40B distribution list. Please find attached my thoughts and observations as the owner of 64 Perkins Row.

Best,

Jean-Marc Berteaux

Jean-Marc Berteaux
64 Perkins Row
Topsfield, Massachusetts
01983

October 5th, 2018

Topsfield Planning Board
8W Common St
Topsfield, Massachusetts
01983

Re: 40B application for 57 Perkins Row

Dear Planning Board members:

Following your meeting last Tuesday, please find herein my comments concerning the proposed 40B site for 57 Perkins row.

Objective observations:

Water – I have four drains on the front of my property that according to the previous owners go under Perkins Row and empty into wetter areas on the 57 PR property. Additionally, this house's water was originally sourced from a spring across the road, also located on 57 PR's property. According to the previous owners, Springs are still there and account for part of why the soil here is always so moist.

As for the aquifer, I am wary that adding a large, concentrated number of additional homes here will impact well depths and access for existing residents. My well is currently at 400ft and while adequate, is certainly no gusher. I would expect the state to study this closely to avoid impacting existing residents.

Traffic – Car traffic is generally sparse, with the exception of school and rush hour traffic in the early mornings and mid to later afternoon. There can be a queue and delays to get onto 97 Southbound, but drivers on PR are generally aware of the road, and on watch for pedestrians, bicycles, and children. Early in the morning and towards later in the afternoons, there is generally a fair number of sport cyclists, often in small groups. On weekends, cyclist groups seem to outnumber car traffic if the weather is suitable. There are often people walking their dogs or just walking on the street at any time of day. As you know, there is no sidewalk or even shoulder to walk on, though existing traffic in my observations has not been speeding and is careful around the numerous blind or restricted view turns. The road is also quite narrow in certain spots heading to 97 from 57 PR, given old growth trees that I hope will be allowed to grow in peace.

Subjective Observations:

Density – I am a big proponent of sensible urban and affordable development in areas where it makes sense. I am also against suburban sprawl. The proposed development of "mixed affordability" for 57 Perkins row makes no sense from a housing perspective. It is far from any services that would make it affordable, while increasing density in an area clearly not able to support it.

According to walkability sites, 57 Perkins row scores very badly (4 or less, meaning a car is needed for everything). While it is "only" 1.3 miles from town, you must cross two very busy roads, with no crosswalks or

sidewalks. The narrowness of PR precludes adding a shoulder or sidewalks, meaning that there is no way to improve the walkability score. In my experience, especially in cold, snowy or rainy weather, walking would be out of the question entirely.

Traffic – Using smaller developments already existing around town (Hickory Lane off of Rte 97, for example) one can see a noticeable impact in volume and congestion where those developments connect with the existing roadways. Given the size and scope of this development, and the lack of improvements that could be made on what is a scenic, narrow, twisting country lane, it makes no sense from an urban planning perspective to site such a development here.

Philosophy – Let's be frank. This is not an attempt by a developer to improve affordability in a community by working with them to build well integrated housing. This is a blatant attempt to skirt town rules by a developer only interested in making a quick buck. They are building the strict minimum number of units, and their application is peppered with incorrect answers to the questions asked by the state. They show no interest in partnering with the town to understand what Topsfield's housing needs and opportunities are, they just want to skip town approval entirely by appealing to the state under the 40B process.

Thank you for your time,

Jean-Marc Berteaux

Donna Rich

From: Samantha Goldfinger <samanthagoldfinger@hotmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, October 06, 2018 2:43 PM
To: Planning Department
Cc: 40B 01983
Subject: Proposed 57 Perkins Row development project

To whole it may concern,

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>> My husband and I have lived on Perkins Row since 2009 and we are extremely concerned and against the proposed development project. Our concerns is primarily due to safety reasons from increased traffic on our narrow windy country road. Also, the amount of houses proposed on this small acreage of land will compromise the surrounding nature and style which is what makes our street so special and a reason we have all moved here. The environmental impact of this level of construction is of serious concern and the size of this project is unacceptable. Allowing development that is beyond the scale that our street can handle is unjust. The proposed development is careless in design and concept for current and future residents of Perkins Row and the surrounding neighborhoods.

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>> We have a three year old and as it is the heavy traffic both weekdays and weekends makes safely walking and biking with her on the street dangerous. We are active people like many of our neighbors and their kids and can often be seen walking and biking on Perkins Row with our dog. When two cars are coming from both directions we have to step way off the road and at least one car has to stop to ensure our safety. And that is during the summer, when there is snow and ice on the road it is much scarier. The proposed project will increase the congestion on a narrow road that is already too congested and will surely result in increased traffic and pedestrian accidents. Many of these pedestrians are children.

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>> The entire community of Topsfield uses Perkins row for biking. The amount of road bikers, especially on the weekends, is tremendous. A development like this will impact the safety of these road bikers. Perkins Row in its current state provides a much needed road for recreation to our community and this development will negatively impact the entire town. I know many Topsfield residents who are against this development for this exact reason.

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>> Steward School on Perkins Row brings people and cars from all over Topsfield so when considering the amount of traffic and residents you have to take into account the amount of traffic from non Perkins Row residents traveling on both sides of Perkins Row Monday- Friday mornings and afternoons. During school drop off and pick up, the amount of cars significantly increases on our little street.

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>> We simply are not a street or community that can handle the amount of development and traffic being proposed.

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>> We implore you to consider the safety of the residents of Topsfield over the financial gains for a developer. We pledge to do whatever we can to endure the safety of our street for our children and pets and to stop this development.

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>> Thank you and I hope the concerns from the residents will be taken into serious consideration.

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>> Regards,

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>> Samantha Abdulla

>> 189 Perkins Row

>> Topsfield MA

>> 617-784-2356

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>> Sent from my iPhone

Donna Rich

From: Maxwell Lawson <maxwell.a.lawson@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, October 08, 2018 9:00 AM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Re: 67 Perkins Row comments on 40B Application for 57 Perkins Row

Good morning,

In addition to my previously submitted comments, I wanted to add that I believe the proposed development would negatively impact one of our most valuable recreational attractions: paddling the Ipswich River. As you can see from the images, the development would be clearly visible from the river, along a very popular stretch (between 97 drop in and Perkins Island/the sanctuary).





Thanks,

Max

On Thu, Oct 4, 2018 at 10:35 AM Maxwell Lawson <maxwell.a.lawson@gmail.com> wrote:
Good morning,

My wife Kristen and my two children (Vera and Chloe) live at 67 Perkins Row, which is 2 houses down from the proposed development ("Perkins Landing"). I've circled us on the map as we are one of the most directly impacted families/houses by the new development. We have some experience with the conservation commission and building in the area as we purchased our home from the developer in 2017 while the conservation order of conditions was still open. We have then subsequently lived in the house for 18 months and become familiar with the area. We were not able to attend the meeting on Tuesday but have heard that there is interest from hearing from concerned residents.

We feel strongly that this proposal should not be approved on a number of grounds, any one of which would be cause to not approve in our opinion:

- 1) **The road and related utilities are not suitable** for such a development
 - a. It is narrow, has a few pinch points with no shoulder, and there is no sidewalk—all of which would make increased traffic unsafe for motorists & pedestrians
 - b. Widening the road would require removal of numerous trees and be impactful to the local ecosystem, disruptive for residents, and change the character of the area; it may also increase through-traffic
 - c. The increased pedestrian traffic (walkers, runners, bikers, strollers) from the development would be dangerous given the street already requires significant caution
 - d. The installation of public water main would create significant impact
 - i. The proposal indicates they will use town water, which is good because a well drawing down from the Ipswich watershed would put unacceptable further strain on a fragile situation
 - ii. However, the proposal indicates to do that they require an 850' extension of a water main; while this could be done in conjunction with widening the road, it means even more impact
 - e. The electrical utilities are somewhat fragile given the above-ground power lines and proximity to trees, exposing the development to power outages (particular in the winter); these could be particularly concerning for elderly residents to whom the development may be attractive
- 2) **The site is not suitable**
 - a. The roadway into the development would have significant impact
 - i. A 20' roadway would need to pass through some sensitive parts of the ecosystem (the existing one already bifurcates a wetlands area)
 - ii. My understanding is that a subdivision road was already a reason for not approving a previous application (per conservation commission), so why should this be

different? What rights would that give the previous application to file a claim? What precedent does that set for any future proposals?

- b. The private septic proposal seems unrealistic
 - i. Many of the houses in the area (ours included) required building an above ground septic. I can't imagine how 28x3BR septic systems can be properly designed and built on the property without any risk to the sensitive local ecosystem.
- c. The buildable area seems unrealistic
 - i. The application suggests that 83% of the site is buildable, but given the terrain this would mean significant filling and grading (\$1.1 million in proposed earthworks) that would destroy all the local habitat and have direct impact on the river ecosystem at the base of the hill
 - ii. The site layout plan shows the majority of the houses are down along the edge of the property closest to the river, which means they are right up against or within the buffer zone for the river habitat; this seems to violate the conservation commissions requirements and certainly the spirit of preserving the river and the important habitats around it
- d. The overall environmental impact would be significant
 - i. The application indicates that there are no documented vernal pools, but there are surely many undocumented ones that would be impacted
 - ii. There is a lot of wildlife that uses the current site as both home and as a pass through; for example, we have 10 – 15 deer that live on this side of the river and travel routinely across the properties. A development of this size would certainly drastically limit their habitat (potentially making the area uninhabitable for them)

3) The local amenities are not suitable for such a development and it does not support sustainable building standards

- a. There are basically no walkable or public transport amenities, so it seems like an unsuitable place to build such a high density development
- b. Transportation can be expensive and so it seems a strange thing to impose on the low income units
- c. The developer self-assessment on the sustainability scorecard incorrectly identifies the site as being walkable to downtown, library, retail, etc – we don't think it is realistic (or safe!) to expect people to walk that
- d. The self-assessment also incorrectly identifies it as including multi-family housing and utilizing existing water/sewer infrastructure

4) The sales expectations for the development seem unrealistic and building this development will likely harm property values (and potentially the Mass Audubon site) over a broad area

- a. The stated target price of \$669k per 3BR, 2165 sq ft single family with 2 car garage on ~0.25 acres does not seem realistic; this is above the median sales price in the area, and neglects the fact that most people choose Topsfield to have space and land
- b. There are not really any comparable properties in the assessment given that this development is unlike almost everything else in the town
- c. We would be very concerned that many units would not be sold and would linger on the market, driving down home values for the town
- d. Existence of a large development on the street will change the character of the street, which may impact property values and potentially visitors to the Mass Audubon Sanctuary

Please feel free to contact us if there is any additional information or clarification we can provide. We sincerely hope that the owners will decide to stop attempting to develop this property into something more than what it has been, as it is deeply important that we preserve the environment around the river for generations to come.

Thank you,

Max Lawson
67 Perkins Row
Topsfield, MA 01983
(617) 417-9628

Donna Rich

From: Michael Bates <bates.mdr@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 10, 2018 6:03 PM
To: Planning Department
Cc: 40B 01983
Subject: Comments for Perkins Landing 40B

Dear Planning Committee,

My name is Michael Bates and I reside at 162 Perkins Row in Topsfield, MA. I have two small children and my driveway is on a steep incline. I fear that the additional traffic caused by this building project on this small country road would significantly increase the risk of vehicular accidents on the road. I am also concerned that the building project is so close to the marsh lands and that the housing would suffer from flooding.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,
Mike Bates

Donna Rich

From: Ken Horgan <kvhorgan@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 11, 2018 9:40 AM
To: Planning Department
Cc: Ginny Dolan-Horgan
Subject: Perkins Landing 40B Affordable Housing

I wanted to voice my concern over the scale and location of the proposed 40B Plan up for review by the the Board for Perkins Row.

Over 40 years ago I would drive up to Topsfield from the projects in South Boston to ride my bike down Perkins Row to Bradley Palmer State Park. The solitude, and rural beauty was so compelling to me that I swore I would work hard to earn enough money to someday live here.

After working full time since I was 17 and going to BU nights for 5 years starting when I was 17 to earn my BS in Business I was able to fulfil this dream by building our home in 1992. We raised our daughter here who graduated Masco and graduated Norwich University to become an Officer in the Army Nurse Corps stationed at Ft Bliss. Two years ago she got married at St Rose and had her reception at the Parish House.

These memories are just some of the reasons why we feel so fortunate to live in Topsfield. We chose Topsfield because of its rural small town charm, great schools, great neighbors, and proximity to Boston. We still bike down Perkins Row to Bradley Palmer to enjoy the beauty that is Topsfield.

Coming from the background I described I am all in favor of affordable housing to give those less fortunate a chance to raise their families in Topsfield. I just strongly believe this is not the area to do this. Perkins Row is special and the road is narrow and winding that makes it a slow careful drive. With a new dense cluster of homes so close to the wetlands and the Audubon it would be disastrous to all of us.

Surely there are other parcels of land in Topsfield that are better suited to a development like this off main streets like Rte. 97.

So please consider this and other objections to this project and reject this proposal to keep this special area of our town as it is.

Regards,
Ken and Virginia Horgan

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Ken Horgan
3 Juniper Lane
Topsfield, MA 01983
(978) 887-2993 - Home
(978) 380-8568 - Cell

Donna Rich

From: jane fraher <riverviewfarms77@comcast.net>
Sent: Friday, October 12, 2018 4:39 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: 40B 01983

My address is 77Perkins Row.I am concerned with the proposed development on 57 Perkins Row.This street is not designed for the kind of traffic that a 28 unit condominium will bring. On a clear day two cars can barely pass each other safely. Snow is a particular hazard. Jane Fraher

Donna Rich

From: Kim Sherwood <kmsherwood@comcast.net>
Sent: Sunday, October 14, 2018 12:23 PM
To: Planning Department
Cc: 'Martha Morrison'
Subject: Sherwood Comments - 40B application
Attachments: Sherwood Comments on 40B Application.pdf

My comments attached. Kim

Comments on 40B Application- Perkins Landing

Kim Sherwood
29 Perkins Row

October 14, 2018

Application

Page 3 of the Application lists **Perkins Row LLC** as the Development Entity .The individuals listed with the state for that entity do not appear to be associated with this application.

Also, the Applicant, **Perkins Landing LLC**, does not appear to be listed on the State Corporation database

<http://corp.sec.state.ma.us/CorpWeb/CorpSearch/CorpSearch.aspx>

On Page 12- the comment stating that members of the Applicant are members of the Development Entity does not appear correct.

Projected Revenue vs. Costs

I am very concerned about the two vastly different revenue projections that underlie this application. The initial projected selling prices on page 17 of \$669,000 for the 21 market rate units and \$220,000 for the 7 affordable units indicates total projected revenue of \$15, 589,000. The much higher prices reflected in the Comparative market Analysis and appearing on page 14 of \$749,000 for the 21 market rate units and a slightly higher \$228,000 for the 7 affordable units indicates total projected revenue of \$17, 325,000.

Assuming the costs of \$14, 879, 570 remain unchanged, these two scenarios result in very different outcomes for the developer. In fact, unless higher than initial sales prices are realized, given the risks, this project does not make sense to undertake.

Scenario #1.

7 units @ \$220,000 (p.17)	\$1, 540,000		
21 units @ \$669,000 (p.17)	\$ 14,049,000		
Total Revenue	\$ 15, 589,000		
Total Costs (p. 16)	\$ 14,879,570	Difference	\$ 709,430 (5%) low?

Scenario #2.

7 units @\$228,000 (p.14)	\$1,596,000		
21 units @ \$749,000 (p.14)	\$15,729,000		
Total Revenue (p.14)	\$ 17,325,000		
Total Costs (p. 16)	\$ 14, 879,570	Difference	\$2,445,430 (16.4%)

Barring any changes in costs, just to break even on this project, the developer would have to sell the 21 market units for \$635,000 each, or \$293.40/sf. That is an aggressive cost per square foot. The projected sale price of \$749,000 in the Comparative Market analysis submitted or \$345/sf- seems very high.

Note that the Comparative Market analysis recommends the lots be released in phases. There are reasons for doing so in any residential build out. Historically, only about 45-55 houses sell each year in Topsfield. This product is something not seen before in town. The absorption rate for this 28 unit development could easily be 3+ years. As well, due to the tight development site and single unit design, it would probably be technically impossible to build out more than 8- 10 lots at a time.

Specific Comments on \$14, 879,570 Cost Estimate

Others more qualified probably have concerns about these numbers. Here are my brief comments.

Building Structure Costs- \$6,612,000. This seems low, just \$236,142/ unit and \$109/sf. Also, a 5% contingency is very low. Add at least \$ 350,000 to the contingency, and scrub the base cost.

Cost to bring in offsite utilities- \$ 275,000. Cost to bring town water in from 850 feet away could be high.

Lawns and Plantings- \$560,000/\$20,000 per unit. Really?

Construction Loan interest- \$420,000. There will be immediate draw down for land purchase and soft costs, at closing. Over time I would think the average outstanding could be at least \$5 million x 5% x 3 years= \$750,000. This number seems very low. Add \$ 300,000+ to budget.

Construction manager \$150,000. This sounds like enough to cover 1 ½ years +/- . More likely \$275,000+ . Add \$125,000.

With those changes alone, the \$700,000 developer's profit under Scenario #1 disappears.

Thanks, Planning Board, for all your efforts to thoroughly review this proposal.

