

23 Fairway Drive
Topsfield, MA 01983
February 3, 2023

Robert Moriarity, Esq., Chairman
Topsfield Zoning Board of Appeals
8 West Common Street
Topsfield, MA 01983

Dear Mr. Moriarity:

Speaking as a resident who cherishes the history and quaintness of our downtown, I am opposed to the Caleb Group's Emerson Homes 40B project as it presently stands. Yes, we need more affordable housing and market-rate housing in Topsfield, but I feel allowing this project to move forward as is will be an irreparable, devastating blow to our historic downtown. I feel we should do all we can to avoid this catastrophe. Here are my concerns:

Project Design - Aesthetics

- The proposed design for the exterior of the building will detract from the charm of our historic district. If built as such, this building will significantly impact our town's charisma. It is important for the exterior to at least look "historic."
- Since this project will not meet our 10% affordable housing requirement anyway, a much smaller housing project on this piece of property would be better for our town.
- (If built, please ensure signage is in harmony with Topsfield's new face forward.)

Project Design – Serviceability

- The majority of units in this project will not be appropriate for people ages 65+ as they are on the second floor.
- Seniors and people with medical conditions and/or disabilities are challenged by stairs; they need elevators.

Looking at the demographics of Topsfield, this project will not meet MA 40B's goal of "allowing working families and seniors to remain in their communities."

- We need more housing for all ages, not just seniors.
- Economically, we need to bring/keep younger people in town to balance out our rapidly aging population.
- Not many Topsfield residents will meet the financial threshold to live there. We know of only (11) Topsfield residents on the waiting list for 55+ affordable apartments.

Financial burden on middle class residents

- Additional fire and police services will be needed to deal with the frequent health emergencies of the elderly, and people without support.
- With Topsfield's lack of access to public transportation, folks will call on the Council on Aging for rides to medical appointments, to pick up prescriptions, and to purchase food. The COA's services are already maxed out.
- Increasing property taxes to support these additional services may force current middle class residents, especially seniors on a fixed income, to move out of town. (As an example, my 2022 property taxes consumed 21.6% of my MA 2021 taxable income.)

Impact on Wetland Conservation Area

- The sprawling footprint and the need for a large septic system will change the area's natural water drainage system, thus affecting the property's vernal pools and brook, threatening wildlife habitats.
- Runoff of pollutants from the paved areas will also adversely affect wildlife.
- Our town values open spaces. It would be a shame to have such a large complex built on this piece of property when it would be more appropriate to build larger housing complexes on Route 1.

Traffic

- The intersection of Main St., High St., South Common and East Common is dangerous, especially during rush hour and the letting out of school.
- Adding another entryway onto High Street where there is already a concentration of intersections will add one more degree of danger.
- The added volume of residents and personnel coming and going will significantly add to existing traffic congestion and the risk of accidents at these already dangerous intersections.

I know of no one in town who is comfortable with the Caleb Group's present housing plan. A much smaller 40B housing complex would minimize its impact on the wetlands, lower traffic concerns, and help to preserve the quaintness of our historic downtown district. My hunch is that if it were put to a vote, our residents would vote to buy the land from the church rather than have to deal with this irreversible burden.

Thank you for listening.

Best regards,



Sandy Guido