2/17/23

To: Lynne Bermudez, Boyd Jackson, Marshall Hook, Cameron Brown, Rafael McDonald

The purpose of this message is to highlight for you our concern about the current and future safety hazards of the location of the driveway of the proposed Emerson Homes 44-unit project. As of approximately a week ago, the driveway, which is directly across from S. Common St,, has been marked off, which only served to increase this concern.

As residents of High St. for 49 years who have observed motor vehicular traffic in the area to increase, we feel the location would accentuate current and future motor vehicular and pedestrian safety hazards and would be an irreversible and permanent mistake. The Main St./High St. intersection has been described by the MassDOT as having a motor vehicle crash history above average crash rates for similar intersections, and according to the Transportation Impact Statement by Vanesse & Associates motor vehicular traffic at that location is projected to increase in the future.

Please find attached our letter of concern that was sent to the ZBA care of Robert Moriarty. We appreciate your attention to this issue.

We appreciate all of the time you give in serving Topsfield.

Sincerely,

Susan & Robert Reece

32 High St.

Susan M. Reece

Attached letter:

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32 High Street

Topsfield, MA 01983

13 February, 2023

Robert Moriarty, Esq., Chairman

Zoning Board of Appeals

Topsfield Town Hall

8 West Common Street

Topsfield, MA 01983

Dear Mr. Moriarty:

This letter is to express serious concerns about the Caleb Group’s proposed Emerson Homes, 40 B project on Rt. 97 and the location of its driveway (now staked out) at #10 High St. Based on information contained in the Transportation Impact Assessment (TIA) of Vanesse & Associates (2022) and 49 years of residing on High St., we believe approving a 44-unit facility with a driveway near a major intersection across from the Library & S. Common St., and close to Steward School would be an irreversible and serious mistake that would exacerbate safety risks.

Route 97 is a busy thoroughfare connecting Beverly and Haverhill continuing into NH. Vehicles coming from the North on Rt. 97 turn Left onto High St. often at relatively high rates of speed. During peak times, especially afternoons, vehicular traffic heading North on High St. queues up at the Stop sign by E. Common St. Five roads converge proximal to #10 High St. (Main St., High St., High St. Extension, South Common St., East Common St.) putting motor vehicles, their occupants and pedestrians at safety risk especially during rush hours when motor vehicles queue up. Adding an access/egress point at that location will make for a 6th road which will only serve to exacerbate these risks **(See map below)**.

![Map

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**Vehicular Hazards of the High St./Main St. Intersection Identified in the TIA**

According to the impact statement by Vanesse & Associates, “*The Main Street/High Street Extension Intersection was found to have experienced 17 reported motor vehicle crashes of the five-year review period, or an average of 3.4 crashes per year, the majority of which occurred on a weekday; during daylight; under clear weather conditions; and involved angle-type collisions that resulted in property damage only. The intersection was identified to have a motor vehicle crash rate that was above the MassDOT statewide and District average crash rates for similar intersections*.”

“*Independent of the Project, one or more movements at the Main Street/High Street/High Street Extension intersection are currently or are predicted to operate at or over capacity during the peak hours. Absent improvement, motorist delays are expected to further increase in the future, again, independent of the Project. In addition to and also independent of the Project, the intersection was identified to have a motor vehicle crash history that warrants further review and the advancement of specific improvements to enhance safety.” (p. 15)*. Despite these identified risks, the authors concluded that the project could be accommodated within the existing transportation infrastructure and suggested that the Town address the problem through reconstruction of the intersection.

(**Note**. The limited afternoon time of the TIA, from 4:00 – 6:00 PM on 5/4/22. The time chosen was not when Proctor and Steward Schools let out at 3:10 PM, when parents and school busses are picking up/transporting children in the environs, and children are awaiting parents at the Library.)

**Potential Risks for Emerson Homes Residents**

The Emerson Homes residents accessing or exiting their driveway from High St. will face challenges due to queued up vehicles during rush hours and rapidly turning traffic coming South on Rt. 97. Further when coming from the village, in their attempts to avoid the Rt. 97 congestion, we expect that they would opt to use South Common St. as a shortcut thus augmenting motor vehicular congestion at the Library and safety hazards on High St. as they attempt to cross over to their driveway.

For a pedestrian to cross High Street near #10 is currently challenging. According to Vanesse & Associates, traffic is predicted to increase. During rush hours residents needing/wanting to walk across to go to the Library and to town will have to traverse through queued up vehicles and vehicles traveling at relatively high rates of speed. Although crosswalk/lights have been proposed, for an elderly person the hazard is especially acute since due to visibility challenges in both directions for vehicles and for pedestrians.

**Summary**. Given the motor vehicle and pedestrian safety concerns noted above and our experiences living on High St., we firmly believe that approval a 44-unit facility with an access/egress at #10 High St. directly across from the Library and proximal to Steward School, Main St. and the center of town would be a serious and irreversible mistake.

<https://www.topsfield-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif5086/f/pages/10_high_street_tia_09.15.22_0.pdf>

Sincerely,

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Susan M. Reece Robert V. Reece

32 High St. 32 High St.

Topsfield, MA Topsfield, MA