February 16, 2023

Mr. Robert Moriarty

Chairman, Zoning Board of Appeals

Topsfield Town Hall

8 West Common Street

Topsfield, MA 01983

Dear Mr. Moriarty & Members of the Zoning Board of Appeals,

As long-time residents of Topsfield, we are writing to share our thoughts regarding The Caleb Group's affordable senior housing project, Emerson Homes.

While considering ways this will benefit and vitalize our town, we find ourselves with many unanswered questions justifying the proposed project. Hopefully you can help us better understand the Emerson Homes project and its potential impact on the Town of Topsfield.

We worry that many residents from Topsfield who have an annual income greater than 80% of the area’s median income would not be able to participate in the Emerson Homes housing opportunity due to the income bracket they will fall under after selling their home. It is our understanding that Chapter 40B is a state statute which enables local Zoning Boards of Appeals to approve affordable housing developments under flexible rules if at least 20-25% of the units have long-term affordability restrictions.

*Has The Caleb Group indicated what percentage, if any, of the 44 units will be available at fair market rents for Topsfield seniors (whose income exceeds the requirements for affordable housing)?*

*Can you confirm that in 40B rental housing developments that all the units, including those rented at fair market rents, are counted as affordable units and are reflected in the Subsidized Housing Inventory?*

*What impact will 44 new apartments have on our already endangered Ipswich River and our threatened drinking water supply?*

The Caleb Group mentions in their Comprehensive Permit Application that the project will have no adverse impact relative to public services or to the Town in general. We find it hard to believe that this project will not add more calls to our fire department, EMT’s, ambulance service, police department and the Council on Aging.

*Will tax revenue received from The Caleb Group (a 501c nonprofit organization) help defray any increase in expenses incurred by the Town if Topsfield has to hire more employees or purchase an additional Council on Aging van to meet the needs of the residents at Emerson Homes?*

The Transportation Impact Assessment indicates that 6,570 vehicles travel on High Street in the vicinity of the proposed entrance to 10 High Street each weekday. The Assessment also estimates that the Emerson Homes project is expected to generate approximately 144 vehicle trips on an average weekday entering and exiting 10 High Street. The Transportation Assessment failed to properly analyze the impact on the abutting roads which feed traffic through the center of Topsfield. For example, these numbers do not include an increase in traffic once Mile Brook Bridge on Perkins Row is repaired and parents/guardians are able to use East Common Street to get to Steward School. The Assessment numbers do not take into consideration the traffic that funnels through the five-way intersection from weekend events at the Gould Barn and The Commons 1854 or the fact that Route 97 is what connects surrounding towns to Route 1.

*What can be done to improve the flow of traffic and the safety of the five-way intersection at High Street/Main Street?*

The Transportation Impact Assessment indicates that no changes will be made to this area. “The Town of Topsfield and MassDOT were contacted in order to determine if there were any planned future roadway improvement projects expected to be complete by 2029 within the study area. Based on these discussions, no roadway improvement projects aside from routine maintenance activities were identified to be planned within the study area at this time.“

We are in agreement that Massachusetts needs affordable housing and overall we support the establishment of affordable housing to sustain the many individuals and families who need housing throughout the state. However, we do question the Emerson Homes project's particular choice in location with the town of Topsfield’s current infrastructure and its close proximity to a five-way intersection with no viable traffic solution.

Thank you,

Ken & Sue Turner

9 Howlett Street

Topsfield, MA 01983

cc: Lynne Bermudez