February 6th, 2023

Robert Moriarty

Chairman, Zoning Board of Appeals

Topsfield Town Hall | 8 W. Common Street

Topsfield, MA. 01983

Dear ZBA,

**Resident Comments**: We are addressing significant concerns with the **Caleb Group’s Emerson Homes 40B Project**.

**DANGEROUS INTERSECTION**

The current 5-street intersection of Main / East Common / High / South Common / High Street Extension has already been identified to have a motor vehicle crash rate *above* the MassDOT Statewide and District average crash rates for similar intersections. Rush hour traffic now backs up beyond the firehouse. With a MassDOT HSIP crash cluster at Rt. 1 & High Street less than ½ mile from the proposed Project, **adding another egress to the already congested intersection** will compound this situation. 44 more cars in the immediate vicinity, a new crosswalk, and more Amazon, FedEx, and UPS deliveries will exacerbate traffic, pedestrian, and driver safety, and negatively impact our Downtown Revitalization efforts.

**TOWN RESOURCES**

The Police and Fire Departments will be called on more frequently. TFD will be further challenged to consistently assemble enough firefighters to respond to fire and medical emergencies. Call volumes have doubled in the last two decades and emergencies increase in numbers and complexity each year. The COA could easily see as many as 50 new clients, overwhelming their facilities, services, and budget. How will all of this effectively be addressed?

**WETLANDS IMPACT**

We are all for low-income affordable housing…but not at the expense of our limited natural resources. The proposed building will be jammed into the property immediately adjacent to an established vernal pool. The building, the septic system, and the runoff from the parking lot would all be within feet of DEP wetlands and School Brook. This project will dramatically change the landscape in an already fragile area of the Ipswich River watershed.

**NO BENEFIT TO THE TOWN**

These new residents as renters will not be contributing substantive taxes to the town…but they surely will be taxing all aspects of Topsfield’s services and resources. Building this complex smack in the middle of our Historic District, adjacent to the Parson Capen House, Gould Barn, Town Common and more, no matter how well “hidden from view” as the builders promise, is not keeping with its historic character and will degrade its integrity. This is an indignity to Topsfield in the guise of 40B’s fairness and equity.

Our conclusion and conviction is that this, indeed, could be a wonderful development ELSEWHERE in town, not within the Historic District, adjacent to the fragile ecosystem of the Ipswich River, nor the 5-street intersection. It is simply an egregious assault on our sensibilities, clearly in the name of profit, not affordable housing.

Thank you for investing your time to allow Topsfield to grow responsibly. THIS PROJECT IS SIMPLY A BAD IDEA ON TOO MANY LEVELS with far more detriment than benefit to our town.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan and Gary Bergmann

24 Howlett Street | Topsfield, MA 01983

cc: Lynne Bermudez | Coordinator, Zoning Board of Appeals