

February 4, 2023

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

Dear Chairman Moriarty and ZBA Members,

I am submitting comments regarding The Caleb Group's Emerson Homes 40 B project now before the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) for approval of variances and permits to move forward to construction. As a point of disclosure, we are abutters to Emerson field at 32 Towne Lane.

I believe there are significant issues regarding the impact of this project, as follows:

1. **TRAFFIC:** Cars entering and exiting High Street at a busy intersection. The Caleb Group proposes an on-demand blinking pedestrian light with a crosswalk to the library. It is not clear how safe this would be for both pedestrians and drivers turning onto High Street from Main Street. The Caleb Group asserts that we already have a traffic problem, and they would not make it worse. Instead, they recommend that the Town address the "traffic problem" through reconstruction of the intersection.
2. **Council On Aging:** The addition of over 40 new clients will place a serious strain on the COA. Low income senior residents will be dependent upon the COA van for transportation, services and other support. The van is already full during the weekly grocery shopping trips. Already, the existing van is scheduled to be replaced in 2025 at a cost of \$125,000.
3. **NATURAL RESOURCES:** Wetlands, vernal pools, and a perennial stream run through the property. This has been important wildlife habitat and open space.
4. **ENVIRONMENTAL:** Major septic system aka waste water treatment would be constructed next to a waterway. Has a septic/treatment plan been fully approved by the Board of Health in conformance with Town regulations and bylaws? The dramatic increase in impervious surface, pavement and the building itself, will pose significant challenges to stormwater management that will further disrupt the site. Emissions from cars and heating/cooling the units will increase the carbon footprint of the site.
Also a concern is light emissions from light poles around the 48-space parking lot.
5. **Need:** Topsfield already has seven over-55 projects, of which seventy-two are affordable rental or ownership units. We are aware of only 11 individuals on the waiting list for an apartment. This project does not address the need for non-age-restricted affordable and market-rate housing.
6. **ZBA Variances:** The developer has requested a long list of variances of numerous Topsfield zoning regulations. These are many more than just substituting the State's wetlands regulations. How many waivers does the ZBA have to grant before Topsfield loses control over this project?

These are the most serious concerns about this project, as there are also more considerations such as increased services and costs from the Town emergency departments.

Thank you for your consideration.

Janet Kmetz

