

January 20, 2021

Zoning Board of Appeals
Town of Arlington
51 Grove Street
Arlington, MA 02476

RE: Another Letter on Traffic Issues – Mugar Property - Thorndike Place Development

Dear Zoning Board of Appeals Members:

I am writing to add new and reiterate my earlier comments on traffic issues (letters dated September 21 and December 6, 2020) which are on:

- Vox on Two is NOT a valid comparison for traffic generation
- Pedestrians walking to Alewife and soccer fields are still an issue
- Turning left onto Lake Street to access Route 2/Belmont

Vox on Two is located in Cambridge which is not known for its schools and in an area that is not near any schools and consists of studio, 1 bedroom, and 2 bedroom units. Vox on Two is physically closer to the Alewife T station and appeals to young adults and others without children. Thorndike Place located in Arlington which is known for its schools and is proposed with 1, 2, and 3 bedroom units. Cambridge appeals to people without children and Arlington appeals to people with children. Households with children generate many more car trips than those without – going to/from schools (the middle school and high school are not walkable), grocery and other necessary errands and appointments are greater. Traffic generation data from Vox on Two is NOT a valid comparison and should not be allowed to be used as is. A development of the same mix of bedroom units and that is located outside of Cambridge and further from public transportation should be used.

While the updated project design as currently proposed alleviates some of the safety concerns related to how the neighborhood is used (during “normal” times) for parking during the week for commuters accessing the Alewife T station and families for soccer practices and games in Thorndike and Magnolia Fields it does not eliminate the issues. A significant amount of this parking and resulting pedestrian traffic is on Burch Street and the portion of Dorothy Road between Parker and Margaret Streets. Due to the significant abuse of the neighborhood by commuters, cars on Lake Street are prohibited from turning onto Little John (or Wilson or Homestead) streets during the morning and evening commuting times. Therefore, the only entrances to the neighborhood are via Burch or Margaret Streets. Those accessing the project site would need to navigate through the neighborhood. The streets are narrow and cars park on both sides of the streets – allowing space for just one car in one direction to pass through. People are walking everywhere. Even if everyone stayed on the sidewalks (which do not exist everywhere), there are several street crossings. Because of all the parked cars, there are limited sight lines. **Adding a significant number of additional cars to this situation is dangerous.** The neighborhood access restrictions during commuting times must remain. If parking is restricted to just one side of a street, or if street parking is eliminated altogether, then the cars that are driving will just go faster, increasing the danger to pedestrians and bicyclists. Especially during the week, drivers that have been stuck in the back-up on Lake Street, speed once they are “released” into the neighborhood. Traffic calming and additional stop signed intersections are already needed. **Adding more cars into the neighborhood is unacceptable.**

To reiterate my ongoing primary concern – turning left onto Lake Street to access Route 2 and Belmont. In normal times, as everyone is aware, the traffic on Lake Street heading towards Massachusetts Avenue is backed-up for hours both in the morning and in the evening. Leaving the neighborhood to access Route 2, the Alewife area, and Belmont, is treacherous. The cars on Lake Street are basically parked. There are NO sightlines for cars that need to turn left out of the neighborhood. Cars on Lake Street block the intersections so it can take time for someone to leave space to get out. And then you cannot see if anyone is coming from the right. After their frustration with the back-ups at the Brooks Avenue traffic light and the bike path, once “released” cars are traveling Lake Street at speed. Turning left out of the neighborhood is treacherous enough and takes enough time as it is. **Adding a significant number of additional cars to this situation is extremely dangerous** and will also cause a significant line of back-ups in the neighborhood. **A new traffic light will be needed on Lake Street at the intersection with Little John Street** to let all these additional cars from the proposed project out of the neighborhood safely.

Bottom line – the number of additional cars and car trips WILL be significant and adding more cars to the neighborhood is unacceptably dangerous. Please do not allow it. Please contact me with any questions or for additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JL' followed by a stylized flourish.

Jennifer Griffith
4 Edith Street
Arlington, MA 02474