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Arlington Zoning Board of Appeals

51 Grove Street
Arlington, MA 02476

Dear Members of the Arlington ZBA,

I'd like to thank you for your due diligence and attention to this matter of the Thorndike Place Development. You've given me numerous opportunities to publicly voice my questions and concerns for the project, and for that I'm grateful.

Since a decision by the ZBA regarding the Thorndike Place Development is due soon, I'd like to take one last opportunity to voice my complete opposition to the project as submitted by the applicant.

The applicant used a strong arm tactic to propel the project forward when there was already widespread opposition by the Town of Arlington, and by members of the community in which the development would reside. Not only presently, but a long running historical opposition of previous attempts to develop on the Mugar land have taken place.

The strong arm tactic is the use of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Permit Act: Chapter 40B. The 40B process provides a tool for developers to avoid inadvertent consequences and expenses of local zoning bylaws when attempting to construct affordable housing. The town of Arlington has not made it difficult nor prohibitively expensive for appropriate affordable housing to be developed.

The gift of the remaining undeveloped land to the Town of Arlington, although generous, is also liable to be a burden if the presently deplorable conditions of the site are now strictly an Arlington issue. The Mugar family, as proven in my questioning of the matter on the 16th of February, and the 11th of March 2021 ZBA meetings, have offered zero assistance to our town, surrounding towns, or the abutters, when it comes to any cleanup, disturbances, or illegal activity on the property. The cost of cleanup, especially on an ecologically sensitive site, could be enormous. These costs may become the burden of Arlington tax

payers, and most likely hurt the population you're trying to assist when approving appropriate projects.

Flooding is an issue that is well documented surrounding the location proposed for the development. Recent documented flooding events have occurred in 1996, 1998, 2001, 2010, 2015, and 2017. The Mugar land was utilized in the 2001 storm event by the DPW to hold water pumped out from a flooded Route 2. The Mugar land was also specifically noted as an area of concern that was vulnerable to flooding by the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program administered by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. The town of Arlington enrolled in this workshop after the July 2017 rainstorm event.

The water table is high in my neighborhood, and this fact should be a data point collected not only near the development, but moving away from the development as well. The water table was mentioned in the 11th of March 2021 ZBA meeting to be around grade 3, and the underground parking garage to begin between grade 2 and 3. It should be noted that these measurements were done during a drought.

Since both land and groundwater will be displaced by the development, and previously pervious surfaces are replaced with non pervious ones, water table testing should continue seasonally to monitor any changes for a number of years. We can see how the landscape hills and valleys will impact where the water will go, but where the water table underground flows is not well documented; except for flooded basements and sump pumps running continuously for weeks on end after heavy rains or snow melts.

"We have a high-priority goal to alleviate the neighborhood flooding problem through the engineering solutions of our proposed plan. The plan has been newly designed to fit the current housing design for the property, and concurrently reduce the adjacent homes' flooding." - Gwen Noyes, 15th of March, 2015. However, she continued: "Groundwater is not our purview."

Clarissa Rowe, a former selectman, called Gwen's quote on groundwater incorrect: "By state law, the property developers must keep their water problems to themselves and not impact adjacent homeowners," she wrote.

Traffic concerns are also an issue with the proposed development. The submitted documents for the development all show Littlejohn St. and Dorothy Rd. as public roads being 40 feet wide each, but they are actually 25 feet wide, which is a large and glaring error. If these incorrect measurements are being told to GreenStaxx, the design company who is also owned by the development manager, Oaktree, then these errors could lead to cut down trees along Littlejohn St. Please assure GreenStaxx can prove to the town that their trucks can maneuver these streets fully loaded.

The main access roads for the development will be Littlejohn St. and Dorothy Rd. On the 8th of March, 2021, the lawyer for the applicant, Stephanie A. Kiefer, wrote to Jessica Malcolm, Manager of Planning and Programs Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency; in this letter she mentions the eight driveway curb cuts being streamlined down to just one. However, what she failed to mention is the density issue when it comes to traffic on these two narrow streets.

Seven of the eight curb cuts mentioned by Stephanie Kiefer were previously planned as driveways for multi-family home ownership units. These units would have been able to provide for two cars each, totaling 14 extra cars on Dorothy and Littlejohn. Adding 14 extra cars on two narrow local roadways is a reasonable addition to our community.

These ownership units have since been removed, and replaced by a single apartment complex of 172 units. Streamlined down to one curb cut is underground parking spaces for 179 vehicles, plus surface parking for an additional 35 vehicles. This is an unimaginable amount of traffic on our small community roads.

The Arlington ZBA is tasked with being a buffer of sorts between the Town of Arlington, its residents, and the whims of developmental progress; I understand the bipartisan nature of the position you've been appointed to serve. However, it would disturb me greatly to see this project accepted as-is, or even accepted with conditions as recently drafted. Doing either of these two things would turn the back of the ZBA to the Town of Arlington, the Conservation Commission, the Arlington Land Trust, the Select Board, our state representative, the Middlesex state senator, and a large majority of the population who have been fighting against any development on this land for so long.

Please do consider all local concerns as mentioned in your draft.

With utmost respect to the Mugar family, and the Arlington ZBA,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew McKinnon". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Matthew McKinnon
9 Littlejohn St., Arlington, MA