
Boston Gas Washington Street proposal

From Janice Sophis <jdnsophis@aol.com>

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To ZBA <ZBA@town.arlington.ma.us>

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Dear Zoning Board of Appeals,

We are writing to you, as homeowners who live in the Turkey Hill neighborhood, to unilaterally oppose allowing Boston Gas an exception to the town's by-laws regarding Turkey Hill. We have owned a home here since 1983.

Arlington by-laws exist to protect the residents of Arlington from unwanted commercial expansion in residential areas. Boston Gas's request to alter 307 Washington Street is clearly incompatible with our by-laws and the public welfare.

Section 3.3.3B says any exceptions to the by-laws must be "essential or desirable to public convenience or welfare." An expansion of Boston Gas in Turkey Hill would clearly violate this rule. First, there already is a gas substation on the corner of Mohawk and Washington Streets. Additional expansions would clearly not be "essential or desirable to the public welfare" or interest.

Turkey Hill is one of the few remaining wooded areas in Arlington and as such should be preserved. It houses wildlife, many trees to absorb carbon pollution and heat; it protects us from flooding, and is just a lovely spot to walk through and to separate the already closely-built houses on Washington Street. Kids in the neighborhood get a little bit of nature as they walk to school through the woods. Things like this are important. Any loss of habitat or protection provided by these woods would affect the residents negatively and is not in the public interest.

Section 3.3.3F says any by-law exception must "not impair the integrity or character of the district or adjoining districts." Destroying any part of the Turkey Hill lot would definitely impair the integrity or character of the neighborhood. As you must know, many of the smaller, original homes built in Turkey Hill have been, and continue to be, replaced by very large houses on the same original lots. This has made for a much denser, less open, and sunny neighborhood than it was only 15 years ago. Compromising this wooded area would further deteriorate the area, and its desirability to new home buyers as well.

As I understand it, there are several options available to Boston Gas to alter their existing presence without compromising our by-laws or Turkey Hill itself. It is incumbent upon Boston Gas to make use of those options.

On a side note, what has Boston Gas done to repair the hundreds of gas leaks reported in Arlington within the last two years? Does expansion in Turkey Hill increase the risk of even more gas leaks? Let Boston Gas get their own house in order before expanding.

We have always considered Arlington the last bastion of suburbia while at the same time providing easy access to Boston. If Arlington makes this exception to its clearly defined by-laws, others will follow and we will slowly become an urban, dense, and crowded town like some of our neighbors. Please do not let this happen. Arlington is a special place for so many reasons, among them its wooded and open spaces. Please keep them safe.

Thank you,

Janice and Fred Sophis
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