

January 27, 2021

Richard Novak, Chair
Zoning Board of Appeals
Town of Sherborn

Re: Meadowbrook Road Petition/ Coolidge Projects

Dear Mr. Novak and Members of the ZBA,

First, thank you for your fair and thoughtful service to the community and maintaining the safety of our wetlands, wells, septic and neighborhoods.

We the residents of Meadowbrook Road request that the 84 and 86 Coolidge project be denied in its current format and/or that any Comprehensive Permit include the following conditions and Permanent Restrictions:

(1) The 84 and 86 Coolidge project and 104 Coolidge Street project should be considered together on key issues.

- As confirmed by Baystone (developer of 84 and 86 Coolidge project) in the December 10, 2020 ZBA meeting on inquiry from the ZBA, the two projects go "hand in hand." Both projects will go forward, or neither project will go forward.
- The 84 and 86 Coolidge project and 104 Coolidge Street project (Pulte) should be considered together on key issues of impact on General Chemical plume, General Chemical clean-up project, well/groundwater contamination from manganese, storm water, loss of floodplain and other environmental impact, rising of the water table, impact on local shallow wells, sewers, Meadowbrook Pond and connected wetlands, flooding, traffic and large project issues. Framingham citizens should be informed of the impact on their water supply during (now annual) drought conditions of supplying the combined 12.3% (2010 census) of Sherborn housing units with water.
- The General Chemical plume could be impacted by the cumulative blasting and environmental disruption from construction of 187 units, plus clubhouse, pool and outbuildings, and the laying of water and sewer pipe from Framingham and Natick.
- Taking the traffic issue for example, there is precedent in the Planning Board letter to the ZBA on January 5, 2021 (PB January, 2021 Letter), regarding a similar issue for the two developments located at 41 North Main Street and 31 Huntington Lane, where the Planning Board states, "Given the already serious congestion through the center of Town, the traffic impacts of both projects need to be considered together."
- The PB January, 2021 Letter also raises the Board of Health issues with release of the toxic chemical manganese from blasting. High manganese levels were an issue for the Town Hall after ledge blasting, and also the blasting on Green Lane (Paul Hill) may have contaminated groundwater with release of manganese. Any manganese from the cumulative blasting on

Coolidge similarly could enter the Sherborn wetland system and groundwater.

(2) General Chemical issues should be foremost in any consideration of development of the 84 and 86 Coolidge site due to the unknown risks of the General Chemical plume.

- We understand that the DEP General Chemical clean-up project is hoped to clean up about 40% of the contamination. That leaves 60% of the contamination.
- The Town of Sherborn engaged a consultant, TRC Environmental Corporation, to prepare a report in regard to the potential General Chemical contamination effects on this site.¹
- The TRC report states in regard to the General Chemical issues in that expert's opinion that the proposed developments could have "dramatic effect on water levels and gradient if they move forward with development" and that the drawdown from the developments' wells "would be profound considering the bedrock source water and fracture flow". Although onsite well and sewer have been determined to be not viable, the issues of fissured bedrock, the General Chemical plume and disruption from construction would seem to all remain the same. The TRC report noted that the "development parcels are close to Meadowbrook Street (sic) where the contamination from GCC was previously detected."
- Will the blasting and disruption of the fissured bedrock speed the plume? Will the well water, wetlands and local aquifer be contaminated? Potential contamination and accelerated spread of the plume could have a profound impact on the health of Sherborn residents.
- We request that the ZBA require independent studies/peer reviews to absolutely ensure that the cumulative development at this scale and location will not potentially cause further General Chemical contamination of the water supply and environment.

(3) All construction of the Coolidge projects and laying of water and sewer pipe from Framingham and Natick should be deferred until completion of the DEP General Chemical clean-up project.

- Where there is a very large risk to the Town if there is any disruption of the General Chemical plume, and a very small benefit of an earlier start to construction or laying pipe, the Town and developers should proceed with caution to ensure the safety of all.
- The interaction between the DEP clean-up act project and Coolidge construction activities is unknown, and a risk that should not be undertaken.
- There should be no construction during de-contamination efforts which could be disruptive enough to local water.

(4) Any permit is conditioned with a Permanent Bond or Escrow, in perpetuity, for the purpose of: (a) paying for annual routine testing of the Meadowbrook Street neighborhood water, and (b) if it is discovered that there is General Chemical,

¹ https://www.sherbornma.org/sites/sherbornma/files/uploads/trc_general_chemical_letter-report_11-27-17.pdf (appears to have been removed from this Sherborn Town website link)

manganese or other contamination or damage to wells/septic/property, the permit includes a plan for how the issues will be resolved and sufficient money in the bond or escrow to fund the solutions, whether the impact is caused by one Coolidge project or both cumulatively.

- We request a bond or escrow sufficient to protect each resident of Meadowbrook Road from any contamination of wells, wells needing to be dug deeper, water purification systems, flooding, Meadowbrook Pond and connected wetlands rising, septic issues, raised water table and other destruction of property.

(5) Any permit for 84 and 86 Coolidge Street is conditioned with a Permanent Restriction for emergency access only through Meadowbrook Road for police and fire vehicles during construction and permanently.

- This permanent restriction has been in effect granted publicly multiple times: most recently at the December 10, 2020 ZBA meeting, and as early as 2017 when we contacted the Planning Board at the beginning of this process and spoke with Gino Carlucci, Town Planner, who was very helpful and who asked the question, 'Why would anyone use Meadowbrook Road when they have Coolidge Street access?' We agree.
- We request that prior to beginning any construction, the first requirement is for the developer or Town to install the same or equivalent gated emergency access closure at the Gray Road entrance, and at the connecting point between the two projects, as has been effective in the Town's emergency access to the Pine Hill School.
- Baystone testified at the December 10, 2020 ZBA meeting that traffic and safety would not be an issue with Coolidge access, citing an independent traffic study and confirming there will be no problem with sight lines for observed 85th percentile speeds. Baystone's predecessor, Trask, also testified that 'Safety is not an issue' at the November 29, 2017 Planning Board Meeting.
- If there is any concern whatsoever with the Baystone assumptions (for example 32 cars exiting in the morning peak-hour for 120 units), we appreciate that the peer review will carefully evaluate these assumptions. We also request that if the Sherborn safety officials have any concerns, that they will also step forward now.
- Again, now or in the future if any of the assumptions prove incorrect in hindsight, there is no need for Meadowbrook Road access. Coolidge is a main street that is appropriate access for these 120 (or 187) units. Meadowbrook Road is and has been a quiet cul-de-sac neighborhood for 50+ years. To make this a thoroughfare for 1000 - 1500 cars a day (2 people/unit/2-3 roundtrips/day/person, plus additional adult residents, guests and delivery vehicles) creates an undue and unjustified burden on this neighborhood's safety and character.

(6) The Baystone 84 and 86 Coolidge project should be declined/reduced to a manageable scale as a 40(b) Large Project.

- These two adjacent projects will increase the size of Sherborn by 187 units or 12.3% (2010 census). This size and scale is not mandated by any 40(b)

regulation. In fact, in Sherborn's category, a "Large Project" under Section 56.03(6) equals 6% of all housing units. 6% of Sherborn's 1479 housing units (2010 census) = 88. The proposed projects are more than 2X of these state guidelines. Is this in keeping with the spirit of the benefit/burden that many officials and citizens hammered out as fair with the 6% rule to advance affordable housing, in balance with impact on local schools, storm water/wetlands/floodplain and other environmental issues, property taxes, fire, police, traffic and small town neighborhoods?

- The massive nature of these projects is of great concern to our neighborhood, potentially impacting our wells, septic, water table, General Chemical and manganese issues from blasting, wetlands, pond, storm water run-off from the largest parking lots in Town by a large magnitude.
- The Town previously invoked Large Project immunity in 2016 when the prior potential developer of the Coolidge properties (Trask) applied to the Sherborn ZBA for a comprehensive permit.
- According to Trask's numbers in its September 5, 2017 presentation, the 67EA plus 88 rentals proposed at that time were sufficient to meet the Town 2020 census for 40(b) requirements – thereby protecting Sherborn from 40(b) until 2030. Why are an additional 32 units needed now, especially when weighed against the impact on schools and the environment, etc?
- The PB January, 2021 Letter noted above raises this concern, which would seem to equally apply to this project, "Scale and visual impact: the apartment buildings are still far out of scale with neighboring structures and are not consistent with the character of Sherborn Town Center." Likewise, we understand that Mass Housing Partnership (MHP) did not provide a Project Eligibility Letter on the Trask 3-story/plus walk-out basement design on this site at a much smaller scale of 88 units as this design was found to be not suitable for the building site because of a concern with the bulk of the housing.
- The current Baystone plan is 17X what was determined to be reasonable in the Town of Sherborn's comprehensive Housing Production Plan (HPP), previously approved by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) pursuant to 760 CMR 56.03(4). In summary, DHCD applauded the Town's efforts to plan for the housing needs of Sherborn and allowed the town to request DHCD's Certificate of Municipal Compliance when "housing units affordable to low and moderate income households have been produced during one calendar year, totaling at least 0.5% (7 units) of year-round housing units."
- From this letter, we understand that the DHCD has recognized this balance of the need for affordable housing with a manageable pattern of growth for the Town's schools and other resources.
- The Town of Sherborn "Housing Production Plan" states the following "Summary of Goals":
 - Goal 1: Actively manage and guide development of affordable homes in a manner that:
 - a. Maximizes local control
 - b. Minimizes adverse impacts
 - c. Incrementally achieves the state's 10 percent goal.

- Goal 2: Increase Appropriately-Scaled Housing Options
 - a. Increase residential options in Town Center
 - b. Enable more diverse residential options throughout Sherborn
- Goal 3: Ensure Residential Development Respects Semi-Rural Character and Critical Natural Resources.”
- The current Baystone proposal would seem to fall very short of meeting any of these goals.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

SIGNATURE PAGES FOLLOW:

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Name: Patricia Michaud 

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