

Monday, August 5, 2024

Sonia Arenaza and Kevin Sheys
42 Brush Hill Road
Sherborn, MA 01770

Sherborn Zoning Board of Appeals
19 Washington Street
Sherborn, MA 01770
Email: jeanne.guthrie@sherbornma.org

Dear Members of the Sherborn Zoning Board of Appeals,

We are writing to formally express our strong opposition to the proposed development at 34 Brush Hill Road. While we appreciate the intention to increase affordable housing, the specific location and scope of this project raise several critical concerns that must be addressed.

1. Impact on Drinking Water Quality and Supply

The residents of Sherborn rely entirely on private wells for their water supply, making the quality and quantity of groundwater paramount. As parents of two raising kids, we are deeply concerned about the quality of water children –and the community—drink and the impact on our health. The proposed development threatens to compromise this vital resource in several ways:

- **Quality:** The construction process and the increased residential density will introduce potential contaminants into the groundwater. Chemicals used in construction, along with increased septic system load, present significant risks of leaching harmful substances into the water supply. Given the proximity to the General Chemical toxic waste site in Framingham, which has a documented history of groundwater contamination, the risk of pollutants migrating towards the new development is a serious concern.
- **Quantity:** Water scarcity is already an issue in Sherborn, with many residents experiencing well shortages, especially during dry months. Adding eight new homes will exacerbate this problem, potentially leading to more frequent and severe water shortages.

2. Traffic and Safety Issues

Brush Hill Road is a narrow, winding country road that already struggles to accommodate existing traffic. The introduction of a multi-house development will significantly increase the traffic load, posing severe safety risks:

- **Safety:** The road is frequently used by pedestrians, runners, and cyclists. Increased traffic will heighten the danger for these road users, particularly given the road's narrow width and blind curves.
- **Traffic Congestion:** The current infrastructure cannot support the expected increase in vehicle numbers. The road often narrows to less than 15 feet, making it difficult for two vehicles to pass safely. The additional traffic from the development will likely lead to congestion and increased risk of accidents, especially during peak hours.

3. Compliance and Waivers

The proposed development requires numerous waivers from established health and safety regulations, highlighting its incompatibility with current standards:

- **Regulatory Compliance:** The fact that the project cannot meet local health and safety regulations without multiple waivers is more than alarming. These regulations exist to protect the community and bypassing them sets a dangerous precedent.
- **Health and Safety:** The extensive list of waivers, particularly those related to septic systems and groundwater protection, underscores the potential health risks to residents. Ensuring that all developments comply with strict health and safety standards is crucial to maintaining the well-being of our community.

4. Low Impact on Affordable Housing and Local Needs

While the development is presented as an affordable housing project, the actual benefits are minimal:

- **Limited Contribution:** With only two out of eight units designated as affordable, the development offers little in terms of addressing the broader need for affordable housing in Sherborn. This minimal contribution does not justify the significant environmental and safety impacts.
- **Local Needs:** The development does not align with the town's overall strategic goals for sustainable growth. Effective affordable housing solutions should be integrated into the community in a manner that does not compromise essential resources or the quality of life for existing residents.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the proposed development at 34 Brush Hill Road poses significant risks to our community's drinking water quality and supply, traffic safety, and regulatory integrity. The minimal benefits in terms of affordable housing do not outweigh in any way these substantial concerns. We urge the Sherborn Zoning Board of Appeals to reject this proposal in favor of more suitable, compliant, and community-friendly solutions to our housing needs.

Thank you for considering my concerns.

Sincerely,

Sonia Arenaza and Kevin Sheys