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TOWN OF FRANKLIN
TOWN CLERK

March 22, 2023

RECEIVED

To:

- Economic Development Subcommittee (Melanie Hamblen, Cobi Frongillo, Glenn Jones, Patrick Sheridan)
- Zoning Board of Appeals (Bruce Hunchard, Philip Brunelli (not sent - contact info not available), Robert Acevedo, Meghan Lee Whitmore, Christopher Stickney)
- Town Council Members (Thomas Mercer, Robert Dellorco, Glenn Jones, Cobi Frongillo, Ted Cormier-Leger, Deborah Pellegrini, Brian Chandler, Patrick Sheridan, Melanie Hamblen)
- Town Administrator (Jamie Hellen)
- Planning Board (Amy Love, Bryan Taberner)
- Conservation/Open Space (Breeka Li Goodlander)
- Town Engineer (Mike Maglio)
- Building Commissioner (Gus Brown)
- Community Preservation Committee (Christopher Feeley, Dave McNeil, Monique Doyle, Jeffery Livingstone, Rick Power, Phyllis Malcom, Michael Giardino, Wayne Simarrian, Lisa Oxford)
- Kathy McAdams, St. John's Episcopal Church
- John Harding, The Community Builders

Re: Franklin 40B Building Projects, Including 237 Pleasant Street

I am writing to members of the many boards and committees that have a stake in the review of 237 Pleasant Street and other 40B Projects, to ask that you not allow this project to move forward. I understand that the project has gone through the steps required by the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) and that the ZBA will likely approve the project since they have addressed ZBA's requests for additional information. I am now asking the next line of stakeholders to deny issuing a building permit for this project to proceed. I have virtually participated in and observed the ZBA meetings in which the proposed project at 237 Pleasant Street has been discussed and I ask that you read through my comments below as to why I don't think this proposed project should move forward.

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I attended the community meeting at St. John's Episcopal Church on 10/23/22 where the Community Builders presented initial plans for the proposed 40B affordable housing development. During that meeting, Rev. Kathy McAdams stated that they had been approached by various for-profit builders who were interested in purchasing their land to develop single family homes. They declined those offers as they didn't align with the church's values and their wish to be stewards of the land. However, they needed to come up with a way to make sure that the church was financially viable for many years to come and decided to explore the idea of developing affordable rental housing on this land while having a land lease on the property to secure their financial viability. At this point in time, they teamed up with the Community Builders to develop a plan.

I recently attended (via zoom) the February 22nd, 2023 meeting of the Economic Development Sub-Committee where they discussed Chapter 40B regulations and how they apply to the housing situation here in Franklin. My specific interest in learning more about Chapter 40B is in regard to the proposed development at 237 Pleasant Street. From what I learned in this meeting, the "Friendly" 40B process in town is fairly new. The proposed project at 237 Pleasant Street was initiated prior to the Friendly 40B process being put into place. It was stated that the 237 Pleasant Street project did not follow the standard process for Friendly 40B in that they first filed with the MA Housing Authority and then submitted the project to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). Because the project is designated as 100% affordable/low-income, they were essentially allowed to "cut the line". Building Commissioner, Gus Brown, said that after that, they went through the normal process of submitting plans, which were denied (State requirement). The project was then sent to the ZBA so they could go through the process of notifying abutters and having requested variances looked at.

Based on the Friendly 40B vote on 121 Grove Street at the 3/15/2023 Town Council Meeting, I believe that the project at 237 Pleasant Street would not have been approved if they also had to go through a Town Council vote. After educating myself on the 40B Process and attending town meetings to stay in the loop, I continue to agree that affordable housing is needed in Franklin. But I also feel that the town has failed on many levels to increase the subsidized housing inventory. The Station 117 apartments on Dean Avenue could have required that a percentage of units to be affordable – this was a missed opportunity both for attaining some affordable housing units as well as designating housing units in the MBTA Communities/Franklin for All initiative (since Station 117 is well within the ½ mile radius of the train station that is looked for in

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MBTA communities). If Franklin had allowed this unit to go through with 10% of the units designated as affordable, the town would have been able to count the full 257 units as part of the Subsidized Housing Inventory.

I would like to ask that the Building Commissioner and the Building Inspections Department deny the building permit for 237 Pleasant Street. As was determined with Schmidt Farm on Prospect Street, just because the land is there, it does not mean it is appropriate to build on it. If St. John's wants to maintain their stance that they are stewards of the land, I would suggest that a better way for them to give back to the community and remain a viable church in the future is for them to sell their excess land back to the town under the Community Preservation Act. St. John's could then use those funds to maintain their viability and the town (if they are able to acquire the land on the back side of 237 Pleasant Street under the CPA) would then be able to extend the Del Carte property with additional trails and parking.

I would also like to suggest that the entire town council, as well as every other department who touches upon the Friendly 40B process watch the February 22, 2023 Economic Development Subcommittee meeting. If they had done so prior to last week's town council vote on 121 Grove Street, the result may have been different.

Moving forward with the Friendly 40B Process, I would like to ask that all stakeholders give more thought to future development and consider purchasing other more suitable parcels of land for Friendly 40B projects. Some thoughts for future development would be the Davis Thayer School property, the St. Mary's Church School property on the corner of Main Street and Pleasant Street and the property at 51 Chestnut Street that is currently for sale. All of these properties are better suited for Friendly 40B and would be within the ½ mile radius for MBTA communities. Developing these alternate properties would give the town a greater buffer to the 10% threshold before "toxic" 40B developments can come in and build whatever they choose.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my concerns.

Sincerely,

Colleen Bond