Dear Members of the Harwich Board of Appeals,

For some time now, I have been a silent attendee of the Board’s meetings concerning the Habitat for Humanity project on #93-97 Rte. 28 in Harwich.

So many very important problems have been brought to the Board’s attention, mostly concerning environmental issues that surround this project.   I do not live in W. Harwich, but in a different part of town.  From my point of view, those environmental worries such as the additional septic tanks possibly threatening the Herring River, the proximity to a flood zone, the destruction of a wooded area, and so many more, underscore what a challenge this has been for all of you on the Board.  And you have tackled a myriad of procedural issues as well.  You have taken considerable time trying to fairly evaluate all the ramifications of this development.

The 40B regulations set forth by the State of Massachusetts, have a “one size fits all” approach.  Creating affordable housing for every town in Massachusetts is an admirable goal.  But think about it……10 foot setbacks in an urban area are totally fine when most people face a building or a parking lot anyway.  But here on Cape Cod?  People fall in love with the Cape, buy a house and plan for their retirement away from urban areas.  They realized that their wooded back yard was privately owned and might be sold someday, but they knew that the Town of Harwich has 25’ setbacks according to the local building codes.  So even if that private back yard area were sold, realistically, since they and their neighbors live in an area of 1/2 or 1 acre lots, who on earth would want to build right up to their back yard?

Furthermore, the whole point of Title 5 septic systems was designed for large lots, with plenty of room between people to adequately filter the water that goes into the leaching fields.

In the complicated jury-rigging of ownership between HECH and Habitat for Humanity at 93-97 Rte. 28, it is difficult to understand what is gained by the swapping back and forth of title, but one thing is very clear.  No matter what valid concerns neighborhood people have had about this project, there is one overriding truth:  townspeople are so emotionally attached to these two groups, no one can really object to anything they propose.  To object, no matter how environmentally valid the concern is, is tantamount to speaking against God, Mom and apple pie.  So HECH and Habitat pretty much have free reign to do what they wish.

There is also the very delicate matter of the concept of affordable housing.  In truth, of the two factions on either side of the aisle at your meetings, I sincerely believe no one was against affordable housing.  We all want working people in Harwich to be able to stay here.  But the unavoidable pitfall was the inevitable accusation of being a NIMBY (not in my back yard) person.  If Habitat went back to one of their earlier formats, they would be refurbishing a house here, a house there, and that would be great with people.  But not a subdivision of 8 “affordable” houses that could just spring up in a rural residential and historical area. The concept of the affordability of a $380 house in Harwich is bizarre and out of keeping of most of the middle income houses we already have valued at under $300K.

My gut feeling is that this project is not right, it’s not fair, and that neighborhood in W. Harwich is getting it shoved down their throats.  That is, unless you folks on the board rethink letting this move forward.

Sincerely,

Anne Stewart

Pleasant Lake

On Tue, Aug 1, 2017 at 6:11 PM, Anne Stewart <stewsanne@gmail.com> wrote:

Yes, I think that copying and pasting to another email is the best thing to do. Now you have received the cover email and my purpose to distribute to the members of the Board, so that is what I will do.  Thank you in advance for circulating to all!

Anne

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 1, 2017, at 2:50 PM, Shelagh Delaney <sdelaney@town.harwich.ma.us> wrote:

Anne,

I was unable to open your attachment. I am not sure why.

Can you send it another way.? Copy and paste onto the body of the email? Hard copy?

Thanks for trying again,

Shelagh Delaney

Harwich Zoning Board of Appeals

732 Main Street

Harwich, MA 02645

(508) 430-7506

**From:** anne stewart [mailto:stewsanne@gmail.com]
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 1, 2017 2:29 PM
**To:** Shelagh Delaney <sdelaney@town.harwich.ma.us>
**Subject:** Re: Attached letter intended for Zoning Board of Appeals members

Resending as I had highlighted the whole thing intending to copy in an email to you, but decided it would be better to send as attachment and forgot to unhighlight.

Thanks.

Anne