

To the Harwich Zoning Board of Appeals

Re: Habitat for Humanity/Hech project at 93-97 Route 28, West Harwich

Dear Sirs and Madams:

I was at the meeting on July 26 during which a question was asked by board member, Dean Hederstedt. He asked if the Board of Selectmen and the Housing Authority knew about the "saleback" tactic that Habitat and HECH were using to "legitimize" this 40B project.

The representatives from Habitat vigorously nodded in the affirmative. I have been to those meetings and have no recollection of that ever being brought up. In fact, I believe that maneuver wasn't even discussed until the ZBA questioned the legality of the application. I would like to know if any of the BOS or housing authority minutes reflects the fact that they were made aware of this "creative" technique that the applicants were using in order to gain approval.

Since Mr. Hederstedt thought it an important question to ask, I believe he was entitled to a more complete answer than just a nod of the head. The Board of Selectmen voted to spend a great deal of town monies based on certain assumptions regarding site control and appropriate procedure. Is it possible that these assumptions have come into question?

As of now, the future owner of the properties designated lots 7 and 8 has derived enormous zoning relief to the point that he is getting six market rate units on property zoned for only two!! . Since it is to be market rate, will he remove the current tenants in favor of ones that can pay a higher rate? If so, doesn't this completely turn the intention of this project on its head? In fact, it looks as if this is a foregone conclusion. Nothing in the "agreement" protects the current affordable rentals or the tenants. What is to prevent the new owner from fixing the property up and selling it for a handsome profit? When this happens, the **net gain of affordable units in our town is ONE!!!**

This project does nothing to significantly address the lack of affordable housing in Harwich. What it does do is:

- jeopardize the environment by building six houses on 10,000 square foot lots in and adjacent to a FEMA designated floodplain,.

- Sell houses to lower income families while making no provisions to address the very real possibility that the new owners will face burdensome flood insurance bills in the future. (I am an abutter who recently was required to buy flood insurance.)

- Legalize currently illegal units for the benefit of a private developer

Develop, with a high-density project, one of the only sizable pieces of open space south of Route 28 in our town.

Circumvent valid questions regarding site control

Suspend reason by spending \$381,000 per house (not including volunteer labor and donated materials, I am told) on houses and then turning around and selling them for \$145,000.

Fly in the face of the Zoning Board and their rightful authority to make and enforce zoning bylaws that are designed to benefit the long-term good of Harwich.

Fail to consider other, better options to address the lack of affordable housing. eg. finding houses that can be bought and restored for less than \$381,000 from the stock of properties already available- town and privately owned. This would truly integrate lower income families in the community.

The list can go on and on, but I will stop here.

I also want to emphasize that I would have the same objections regardless of the income level of the prospective homebuyers. It could be a development for wealthy people and the facts remains: Too many houses, wrong location, no appreciable benefit!

I would, however, like to express my appreciation for the requirement to retain the Chase House with its architectural integrity intact.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

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CC: Michael MacAskill, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen