

Conor McCormack

From: Amy Fleming
Sent: Friday, January 19, 2024 10:39 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: Conor McCormack; Stephanie Collins
Subject: FW: Form submission from: Citizen Comment Form

From: Millbury MA via Millbury MA <cmsmailer@civicplus.com>
Sent: Friday, January 19, 2024 9:19 AM
To: Amy Fleming <AFleming@millburyma.gov>
Subject: Form submission from: Citizen Comment Form

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Submitted on Friday, January 19, 2024 - 9:19am
Submitted by user: Anonymous
Submitted values are:

What is your comment about? General Comments to the Town
What are your comments?
Rice Pond Village – Board of Appeals

While this may not be as brief as we initially intended, we have important information to share with you, and we trust that you will carefully review the details.

As immediate neighbors to the currently deliberated Rice Pond Village project before the Board of Appeals, we wish to offer public commentary. We own two parcels of land—one with our residence and the other encompassing the area around Simpson’s Pond, an essential wetlands resource.

We obtained ownership of Simpson’s Pond, situated between Aldrich Avenue, Rice Road, the Providence & Worcester Railroad, and the New England Power Company transmission lines, with the purpose of conserving the land, safeguarding vital wetlands resources, and preserving wildlife habitats. Given our awareness of the wetland challenges experienced by residents of The Highland Ridge condominium development in Berlin, Massachusetts—constructed by the same developers—we are apprehensive about the possibility of similar issues arising here in Millbury. We are particularly concerned about the potential transportation of loose silt particles by rainwater or surface water into the drainage system, affecting Rice Pond, Simpson’s Pond, the brooks, and tributaries that contribute to the Blackstone River watershed, and posing a potential ecological impact.

We express profound concern regarding the potential rise in traffic due to the proposed development, particularly given the insufficient capacity of Rice Road to handle such increased volume. Despite the town’s efforts to repave and widen Rice Road, it remains relatively narrow. Rice Road is currently managing a traffic volume exceeding twice its design capacity, and this does not account for the extra traffic from cut-through routes, not to mention the daily delivery services. Our apprehensions encompass the speed of cut-through traffic, posing risks to neighbors walking with small children, engaging in running or cycling, and including a 92-year-old couple delivering meals to our recently widowed 98-year-old neighbor by foot in evening hours.

The proposed project has strengthened the unity in our neighborhood, fostering increased interactions. We fear that project approval may erode the close-knit character of our community.

In case the project is not outright denied, we recommend the following conditions, in no particular order:

1. To address speed issues both now and in the future, we request the installation of official speed limit signs not only on Rice Road but also on South Main Street and Providence Street. While signs may not entirely resolve excessive speed problems, they provide our police department an opportunity to enforce speed limits with actual posted speed limit signs.
2. Installation of stop signs and stop lines at Thomas Hill Road and Aldrich Avenue intersections with Rice Road.
3. Install stop signs and stop lines on Rice Road at the intersections with South Main Street and Providence Street and add reflective centerlines nearing these intersections to assist drivers in maintaining their own lanes and orienting drivers to new driving patterns.
4. Install a stop sign and stop line within the public Rice Road right-of-way at the exit to the proposed development so that the police department can enforce any violations of failing to stop. The police department cannot enforce traffic controls on private property.
5. Reinstallation of railroad crossing symbols on the pavement that were removed during repaving on both sides of the railroad crossing.
6. Installation of new state-of-the-art railroad crossing gates.
7. Install a streetlight to illuminate the railroad crossing similar to intersections throughout town, especially with the odd geometry and steep slope that currently exists.
8. Expand and redesign the railroad crossing to facilitate the comfortable passage of two vehicles simultaneously and improve the overall visibility.
9. Install a guardrail on the east side of Rice Road between Providence Street and the Providence & Worcester Railroad crossing.
10. Decrease the grade of Rice Road and widen the pavement width between Providence Street and the Providence & Worcester Railroad crossing to reduce to reduce issues with winter accumulations making condition treacherous.
11. Uphold the necessity for two entrances to this development and refrain from granting exceptions for access from a minor street to multifamily developments, as mandated by our zoning bylaw. Reject any attempt to replicate the impracticality witnessed in the previous project where developers proposed two entrances on Rice Road less than 200 feet apart.
12. Comply with the requirements outlined for a Suburban 2 development, including specifications for height (limited to 30 feet to maintain the character of our one- and two-story neighborhood without introducing skyscrapers), density, parking (ensure no reduction in parking requirements), setbacks, and other pertinent criteria.
13. Reconfigure the intersection of Providence Street and Rice Road to a standard “T” intersection to create turning lanes in both north and south directions so vehicle stacking that does not allow vehicles to back up onto the railroad crossing or Providence Street, as this would increase number of rear-end collisions or train-vehicle collisions. Fix the impossible right turn southbound on Providence Street onto Rice Road.
14. Install a sidewalk adhering to our subdivision rules and regulation along the length of the north side of Rice Road from the existing South Main Street sidewalk to Providence Street and along Providence Street to align with the existing sidewalk on the east side of Providence Street to permit walking to and from the local supermarket as elderly neighbors have done and do, and how other residents use as an exercise loop for walking or running. Install a crosswalk across Providence Street at Rice Road adhering to MassDOT design standards for easy identification and recognition.

As evident from this list, we’ve been tracking the unresolved public safety and glaring design concerns highlighted in the previous proposal for this site as well as the current proposal. We additionally back and endorse all the points laid out in the collaborative comment letter submitted by Richard Gosselin and Francis

DeSimone, both members of our Planning Board. Unfortunately, these issues have not been alleviated and, if anything, have been exacerbated by the increased number of additional units. Each of these public safety issues must be completely addressed before construction commences, or at the very least, before issuing the first occupancy permit.

In our opinion, the developer's plans appear unsuitable for both the site and the inadequate minor road. Several challenges require attention, and it seems that the developer is not inclined to engage in the collaboration that the Local Initiative Program (LIP) is intended to facilitate. This issue was emphasized during Steve Stearns' presentation, and the dismissive attitude exhibited by both the engineer and developer during the public hearing underscored the gravity of the concern. It appears that these developers tend to adopt a dismissive stance when presented with facts and expertise. The board should not tolerate such behavior. We appreciate Michael George's comments and trust that the entire board will hold the developer accountable.

We urge you to consider our viewpoint when assessing this proposed project. If you were in our position, would you feel at ease jeopardizing your safety solely for the benefit of a non-resident developer seeking profit through Chapter 40B? Please make your decision based on the factual information presented by Steve Stearns and others, both in the past and during the forthcoming public hearings.

Nearby communities have effectively resisted Chapter 40B project proposals from this developer, insisting on design modifications or leading developers to abandon their plans. This success is attributed to adherence to local regulations and the developer bearing offsite development costs rather than placing the burden on taxpayers. Millbury officials, collectively, should avoid deflecting responsibility and instead, unite in advocating for the best interests of our community. This is the opportune time to collaborate as a cohesive team and community, as we rightfully expect from our town officials, boards, committees, and employees. Be the board that actively seeks assistance, welcomes input, and adopts a team-oriented approach to address this development application. The isolated approach taken by town officials, boards, and committees has proven ineffective for the residents of Millbury.

Due to health challenges, attending public hearings is not practical for us. Therefore, we formally endorse every point articulated in Steve Stearns' presentations to your board and whenever he represents us as our neighborhood and community spokesperson. Steve has dedicated significant time and effort to research and advocate, not only for our neighborhood but for the entire town. We hold high regard for his contributions, as do our neighbors.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Elaine and Robert Molino
==Please provide the following information:==

Your Name: Elaine and Robert Molino

Your E-mail Address: [REDACTED]

==Address==

Street:

City:

State:

Zipcode:

Phone Number:

Organization:

For Office Use Only: The results of this submission may be viewed at:
<https://www.millburyma.gov/node/2/submission/1801>