

RECEIVED JUL 25 2014

From: bearacker@gmail.com [mailto:bearacker@gmail.com] **On Behalf Of** Alton Acker
Sent: Thursday, July 24, 2014 11:25 PM
To: Planning Department Email
Subject: The Retreat

Members of the Board,

I'd like to start by mentioning that I can't conceive the idea that things have progressed to this point in entertaining plans from Landmark Properties for The Retreat. In view of the fact that the zoning of the land parcel does not allow dormitory type dwellings in RO zoning, Landmark has been pursuing their agenda for well over a year, despite protests from local property owners in Cushman and surrounding areas. This is especially puzzling since Amherst has an existing bylaw preventing misuse of property not zoned for dormitory dwellings. And since Landmark, from the first, stated that the cluster housing was for "students only", this relegates buildings for this purpose to be on campus property. In my estimation, Landmark should have been sent packing a year ago, in view of only the discrepancy of their zoning status. The original statements by Landmark that the project was only for students has been softened slightly, in an effort to skirt their problem. One can be assured that only students would/will be residents if this project reaches fruition. They're the only ones likely to tolerate the odd "clock" of students, which differs greatly from the average single family dwellers in the surrounding area. And who wants the freedom of off-campus dwelling more than freshmen and sophomores in college. Free of the restraints of home and high school living, they seek "freedom." Unfortunately a lot of students in this age group will use their freedom unwisely. That's why they're zoned for campus living!

It's also an important aspect of the zoning that private developers have not been allowed to build "students only" apartments in Amherst. That's a function of zoning and the Amherst bylaw preventing developing like this. If Landmark is allowed to build their project it will not only impact and destroy Cushman Village, it will set a precedent for any developer to build "students only" apartments, wherever they wish. Why not, Landmark did it, didn't they? Many regular apartments have become student filled, after family renters found conditions around them intolerable. This is long-reaching legislation, and an important decision for Amherst to make. Amherst is barely hanging-on to a low percentage of single family dwellings right now. This project could only send those numbers down.

I could go on about the impact on Cushman from the increased traffic and number of students "planted" in our midst, and perhaps even the loss of tax revenue from the decreasing land values of properties, and subsequent assessed values. How about the concept of a project that falls into disuse and repair after being built and then "flipped" to a buyer who then manages things badly. What do you do with a cluster development that in there and in a bad state? Once it's there, it's there. The concept that it's going to be a big money maker from the taxes it'll pay is grossly wrong. It'll cost Amherst more than they'll ever make. Just maintaining the roads, water and sewer services will over-burden Amherst's public services.

The last point I'm thinking about is the torturing of forested land. On the West side of Henry Street there's mostly sand and gravel makeup. On the East side there's mostly ledge, and swampy land. After experiencing blasting for the Amherst water treatment plant, I can only say that there's much more blasting that will be needed for this project, and what a problem it will

cause! Stripped land will also threaten and destroy endangered species, such as the spotted salamander. Just the idea of enduring the magnitude of this taking place has Cushman residents on edge. I believe many Amherst residents are against this project, but are silent, happy it's not affecting them. However, it will affect them, and Amherst in general. Maybe not immediately, but eventually things will change, and not for the better. This project is ill-advised, and I implore you to stop it.

Respectfully submitted,

Alton Acker
53 Henry Street
Amherst, MA

RECEIVED JUL 25 2014

From: Sally Lawall [mailto:lawall@complit.umass.edu]
Sent: Friday, July 25, 2014 3:10 AM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: Cushman village proposal

Dear Ms. Brestrup,

I understand that it is possible for Amherst residents currently out of town to contribute comments to the Planning Board concerning the Landmark proposal for Cushman village.

My husband and I have lived close to Cushman for many years, and have enjoyed its proximity both as an attractive rural town and as a good place for a quiet walk with children or dog.

This small, low-key community is not an appropriate location for a large, densely populated student housing development. Under the current proposal, the historic Cushman area would lose its character as a quiet residential community and be transformed into a bustling upscale dormitory complex with a dormitory's characteristic noise and problems (and calls on town services). Cushman center would also become the focus of enormous traffic, a problem for which no real solution has been found, and (moving on) more than even a widened Pine Street can accommodate.

Landmark, as documented repeatedly in the papers, does not seem to be a responsible developer and I see no reason that the town should accommodate them with waivers. The history of their similar projects does not bode well for Amherst. They should not be encouraged.

Sincerely yours,

Sally Lawall

