

From: Janet Slocum [mailto:jslobvan@hotmail.com]
Sent: Friday, August 01, 2014 11:51 AM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: concerns regarding watershed changes

RECEIVED AUG 01 2014

Dear Ms. Brestrup,

I have enclosed a letter I wrote to the conservation commission regarding classification of streams and changes in the watershed at Landmark's proposed subdivision. At the end of the Wednesday meeting the planning board suggested the consultant look into water/runoff issues and I wanted to make my concerns known. The last paragraph of the letter addresses the proposed change in the flow of water from the Fort River watershed to the Mill River watershed and the issues that may go along with the changes.

Thank you for taking the time to handle these letters and for the remarkable in-depth analysis you did on the definitive site plan.

Yours truly,
Janet Slocum

July 30, 2014

Dear Conservation Commission,

I am an abutter to the proposed Retreat and would like to take a few moments of your time to discuss some issues I see with Landmark's classifications of streams in the area between Henry Street, Flat Hills Road and Market Hill Road. I am also concerned about changes in runoff proposed by the development.

I have lived on Henry Street for 5 years and over that time I have walked my dogs along the logging trails in the west section of Cowl's land about twice a week. I typically walk up to hill behind my house to the electric lines, walk south, then cross the stream via footbridge over the old Robert Frost trail. I travel east to one of the N-S running logging roads and then travel north crossing the first stream, returning either by reversing my path or walking off-trail west to the electric lines and home.

My dogs are watering-loving and other than during a hard freeze return wet and muddy. For the last 2 years, the stream at the foot bridge has continued to noisily flow. This stream travels north-south in the ravine just past the power lines. At points along it's travels it becomes quite wide and flow is often difficult to see but it has never to my recollection ever been dry. In addition, the northern most tributary to this stream runs through a fairly rocky area and also noisily flowed all last year and this year as well. The more southern tributary of this stream is often difficult to follow at the logging road. It is buried beneath slag and has spread wide outside its original bank. I cannot really say if that piece dries out or not, since it flows beneath the logs.

My second concern is about the changes to the water runoff that Landmark proposes. The property in question is the continental divide of Amherst, with the northern most slice of land flowing into the Mill River and the majority of the remaining land flowing into the Fort River. I have to admit that I have a limited understanding of the runoff data but it appears that the subdivision proposes to increase surface runoff down the hill toward the corner of Henry Street and Market Hill Road by more than 30 times (Q100) and reduce the flow out the salamander

tunnel into Hawley Swamp. They are shifting the flow from one watershed into another. It seems to me that this will cause the drying of Hawley Swamp and will degrade the breeding habitat of the salamanders in addition to other habitats downstream. The increase in the flow into the Mill River watershed puts the homes at the bottom of Henry Street in danger of both flooding and sliding earth. I would appreciate if those with more knowledge took a look at this issue and made sure that both our natural resources and homes are protected.

Thank you.
Janet Slocum
58 Henry St.

RECEIVED AUG 01 2014

From: Janet Poirrier [mailto:jpo.vox@gmail.com]
Sent: Friday, August 01, 2014 11:20 AM.
To: Planning Department Email
Subject: meeting response

Dear Members of the Board,

Thank you for the astute, thoughtful questions and comments you put forward at Wednesday night's meeting. I so appreciate the enormity of the job before you.

I'd like to refer you to [this article](#) from The Amherst Student of this past May, reiterating the ban on fraternities, on campus and off.

"...the condition of seeming to have some measure of responsibility without possessing any measure of authority is inherently problematic," the board's statement said.

The article is insightful and resonates solidly with questions raised at the meeting concerning the land use of the proposed Retreat location. Perhaps Bidy Martin, President of Amherst College, said it most succinctly:

"The ambiguous status of fraternities was at the top of my list of concerns," Martin said. "The college has responsibility for the students who belong to them and who take part in their activities, but has no way of providing oversight and no authority. This is not tenable."

Substitute "The town..." for "The college..." and the problem becomes clear.

So, if the Retreat is built, and it becomes a *fraternity-like* or *sorority-like* private compound, *no one* is really responsible. It will not be a self-sustaining entity, like a college which acknowledges its limitations. It won't belong to the University, of course, because the State admittedly has no part to play in private enterprise. The inherent dysfunction of a Retreat-like development, especially in that location, cannot be mitigated, prevented, policed, or ignored. It's too big. The implications are too broad.

Have you ever known anyone with a parrot? I had one once, and I loved him dearly, he was so much fun. They make charming, active companions, but they don't grow up, so to speak. Parrots have the mentality and intelligence of a 2 yr. old, and they're extremely long lived, up to 50 years or more. Imagine living with a 2 yr. old for the rest of your life... I think you get the metaphor. The Retreat, if built, will never pleasantly surprise us with its good manners, it can only be controlled and accommodated. It will never mature into a welcoming residential community. It will always be the Perpetually Hungry 18-yr old King Baby up on Cushman Hill, wailing for more and more of the town's resources, tax money, and time.

Thank you for your work on our behalf.

Best regards,
Janet Poirrier
Flat Hills Road

RECEIVED AUG 01 2014

From: Jack Hirsch [mailto:hirsch.ja@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, July 31, 2014 3:44 PM
To: Planning Department Email
Subject: Request for the Planning Board

Please forward this request to the Planning Board, Mr. David Webber, Chair

I think it would be instructive for both the public and Planning Board members to get some idea of how the Retreat development might look from a distance. It undoubtedly will affect the view from the immediate area, but from how far away will it be visible? Will it be visible and what will it look like from Hadley? How will it appear as one drives north on North East St? How will it appear as one drives east on Meadow or Pine Streets?

Would you please request of the applicant to provide cross-sections showing those types of images? Amherst residents would be informed by those views.

Thank you very much,

Jack Hirsch

RECEIVED AUG 01 2014

From: Tom Baker [mailto:the1baker@comcast.net]
Sent: Thursday, July 31, 2014 10:08 PM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Cc: Lynne Baker
Subject: Letter to Planning Board

Amherst Planning Board
C/o Ms. Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner
4 Boltwood Ave.
Amherst, MA 01002

July 31, 2014

Dear Ms. Brestrup and Members of the Planning Board,

I attended the July 30 meeting of the Planning Board, and came away with several concerns that I would like to share with you now.

First, I was amazed to see that "Rock Work" amounted to 36% of the **entire** budget for all site preparation, road work and landscaping! Over **six million dollars** to be expended on rock work surely means that extensive blasting will have to take place. I beg you to question Landmark closely on this point, and to discover exactly what they are contemplating. Surely they would not have allocated so much money for this purpose without specific plans. As others have pointed out, this wholesale destruction of the natural features of the site is not in accordance with our master plan, and it also reveals (yet again) the unsuitability of these rocky parcels for this type of development. Moreover, extensive blasting is bound to have repercussions among the abutting property owners. Damages to foundations, interiors, and wells are very real but very hard to attribute to blasting, especially if a large corporation is being sued by an individual property owner.

I was very happy to see the beginnings of a forthright discussion concerning the true nature of the Landmark development. Far from being single family dwellings, these buildings are simply mini-dormitories that are built for students. Yes, a family of four could rent four rooms at over \$800 per month, per room, for **\$3,600 a month!** Plus utilities, of course (electric heating, no less). Their home would be only ten feet away from their neighbors on either side and from the street, if the setback variances are allowed. The children could play in their ample parking space, since most families have only two cars rather than four. Certainly they shouldn't be playing on the roads with those 10% grades. This scenario not going to happen, of course, because the renters are going to be students. Why would any family want to pay impossible prices for ruinously expensive, unsuitable housing? And since "social dormitories, or similar use related to Amherst College, Hampshire College or UMass" are not permitted in R-N and R-O zoning districts, the Retreat should not be allowed.

Speaking of social dormitories, nothing says "social" like a good amenity. I find it very troubling that Landmark refuses to say what the Amenity Parcel is going to contain. A really good amenity will draw young people from near and far, thanks to social media. Can you imagine a swarm of visitors' vehicles choking the roads as the party gets underway?

I am suspicious of Landmark on a number of issues. The presentation of needed material at the **last minute** is a consistent pattern. Your committee and others should receive information in a timely fashion so that it can be studied before making decisions. The withholding of information (see previous paragraph) is another problem. Surely there has been enough time to settle on the amenities for these social dormitories. But mainly, I wonder why, considering all the obvious deficiencies of the parcels that are being considered, does Landmark continue to press ahead with this misbegotten project? The parcels are in the middle of a settled historic neighborhood; the land itself, judging by the variances requested alone, is totally unsuitable for this kind of project. The presentation to the community (Cushman and Amherst) has been misleading. I can't help thinking that there is some larger corporate reason for the company to press forward in the face of these unfavorable circumstances. Quite possibly Landmark is desirous of securing a Retreat in New England to show their viability in this part of the country, I hope that our community is able to resist this sort of pressure.

Our country is going through a crisis of confidence in government at this time. We hope and pray that our **local government** will be truly representative of the will of the people, and not a tool of the larger corporate interests that are presently wielding so much power and exerting so much undue influence. You are the thin red line in this instance, and we are counting on you to make the wise decision for our town and to protect our established neighborhoods. Thank you for your service to us all.

Sincerely,

Tom Baker

RECEIVED JUL 31 2014

From: Lynne Baker [mailto:lrbaker@philos.umass.edu]
Sent: Thursday, July 31, 2014 11:52 AM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: Stop the Retreat

Dear Ms. Brestrup and members of the Planning Commission,

At the meeting of the Planning Commission last night (7/30/2104), I was struck by a couple of remarks by (I think) Mr. Tucker. He insisted that we distinguish between land development and use of the property. OK. Distinguo:

Land Development: The Retreat (>\$6mill "rock work"; 10% grade roads that will be icy) is totally incompatible with the quiet rural atmosphere of the land. The Retreat would destroy its natural, social and historical character. (I wonder how many 200-year-old small homes in the neighborhood would even survive the blasting.)

Use of property: Students and their unacceptable behavior. Call it 'exuberance' if you like; but Amherst has plenty of experience of students' running amok. The unknown amenities suggest that the facility will really be social dorms, which are explicitly prohibited in R-O zones.

No family will live there. No family needs or wants an apartment with 4 bedrooms, 4 baths, 4 parking places. ("Single-family" is a subterfuge, as is "cluster homes.")

These points are old news, but if someone wants to distinguish between land development and use of property, we should emphasize that the foreseeable results of each alone warrants rejecting the Retreat.

Mr. Tucker also pled for the Planning Commission to frame the issues. Although I have no official role in the town at all, framing seems easy: The big issue--prior to decisions about parking--is whether to let this project go ahead. On the merits of the case, the answer seems obvious: NO.

The last thing that I want to mention is somewhat delicate. I heard more than one suggestion that it is unwise to cross the Jones' family with all its money and influence. I am proud to be a citizen of Amherst, but I would not be proud if Amherst were to distort and misrepresent the actual features of a project--by using deceptive language like "single family" or "cluster home"--in order to keep peace with a powerful family. I fervently hope that the Planning Commission will exercise its obligation to the whole community with courage and good judgment.

Best regards,
Lynne Baker
137 Shutesbury Rd.

From: Barbara Ford [mailto:barb4ed@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, August 04, 2014 6:33 PM
To: Planning Department Email
Subject: RE: The Retreat SUB2014-00002/M23945

RECEIVED AUG 05 2014

Dear Planning Board members,

I am an abutter, I have also served my town on many committees, including the PB and the ZBA.

One of the strengths of Amherst and the glue that holds us together is our neighborhoods. Indeed town meeting members are elected by neighborhood-precinct.

The proposed Retreat threatens the character not only of our neighborhoods, but also the entire town.

Throughout the Zoning By-Law the Character of the neighborhood is mentioned as criteria for a finding. 2.01, 4.313, 11.20, 11.24, 10.389 are but a few of the citations that can be interpreted as requiring compatibility with the surrounding residential neighborhood, and the environment.

I hope you will consider the purpose of the RO district, which is meant to be lower density than RN.

The sideline waiver requested by the developer would result in a high-density neighborhood that violates the intent of the RO zone. The developer's proposed heavy-handed architecture along with its random design elements is also not suitable for an RO district.

I strongly urge you to stand up for the Zoning Bylaw.

The Zoning Bylaw does not permit student housing in the RO zone.

If a permit is issued for The Retreat-- which is intended for student housing-- it will amount to a violation of the Zoning Bylaw. All respect by future developers and our community for this document -- the Bylaw -- will be lost.

In other words, the Zoning Bylaw will become meaningless.

I appreciate the consideration of this proposal will be a difficult task for the citizen members of this Board

I hope that you will uphold the purpose of our Bylaw, and the Master Plan, and preserve the character of our greater neighborhood, including the possible fall out for all of the north end of Amherst, and for the Town as a whole by ruling accordingly.

Sincerely,

Barbara Ford

RECEIVED JUL 30 2014

From: Janet Poirrier [mailto:jtpoirrier@icloud.com]

Sent: Wednesday, July 30, 2014 10:16 AM

To: Planning Department Email; Tucker, Jonathan; Conservation Department Email; Willson, Elizabeth; Malloy, Nathaniel; Brestrup, Christine

Subject: Addendum to my letter re: the Retreat

Dear folks,

In my previous letter to you I addressed a number of issues including the diversity of traffic on Flat Hills Road.

Unfortunately, I omitted possibly the most relevant type of traffic we see on this rural road--farm equipment. Tractors, farm and horse trailers, mowers, haying machines, and farm trucks of all sizes.

There are people on this road who still supplement their living off the land. This traffic alone contributes to the care with which one must negotiate the blind hills and tight curves on this road. There is little room for errors in judgment due to youth, poor timing, or simple disregard.

Thank you again for your kind attention and hard work.

All my best,

Janet Poirrier

290 Flat Hills Rd