



TOWN OF COHASSET PLANNING

41 Highland Avenue
Cohasset, MA 02025
Tel: (781)-383-4100, ext. 5127



MEMORANDUM

Date: August 4, 2020

To: Planning Board

From: Lauren Lind, Planning Director

RE: Additional Public Comments Received regarding HVBOD SP & SPR Application 124/87 Elm Street

The following public comment was received regarding the Harbor Village Business Overlay District Special Permit and Site Plan Review Application for 124/87 Elm Street between July 15, 2020 and August 4, 2020.

August 2, 2020 – Douglas McGregor, 7 Border Street; Comment via email:

See attachment A for letter

August 3, 2020 – Jean Patterson, 12 Ledgewood Farm Drive; Comment via email:

“Hi Lauren;

I had promised you additional comments awhile back and unfortunately I am just able to get to it now. Sorry it leaves little prep time for the Wed Aug 5th meeting.

I did sit in on the Zoom meeting on July 8th.

I thought the developers had a very thoughtful and organized presentation.

It seems that they believe they are complying with the intent of the zoning laws and checked all the boxes except for parking.

I think that Parking is a major concern that the planning board should pay attention to as they continue the review.

Personally, during the summer I know I am back and forth between Elm st and Margin st going to and from Atlantic ave. many times per day. The street parking makes it impossible for two cars to pass each other on Margin st. by Stockbridge. I don't see how the developers are going to build out their space and have commercial spots in that area as they showed on their plans.

It seems residents and visitors that use the town dock are going to be looking to park on the street to go on their boat potentially all day long and if they don't find street parking, I am afraid they will take up the private and commercial spots that the Condo complex intends to create and then we may have an issue with the inability to have commercial business flow or angry residents who can't find parking for themselves or their visitors. Potentially fewer Condos could be developed to ensure parking is maximized.

During their presentation, the developers also mentioned private amenities and shared amenities, but they failed to give examples of what these amenities are.

Will the complex have an outdoor pool? Will the complex have balconies or patios for private grills or will their be common grills similar to a set up at Avalon? Will there be storage space for owners or bike racks for the public? What other amenities will be open to public vs. gated for the residents?

I also heard the developers mention that 10 + units will be 1 bedroom units around 1100 square feet. As I said in my earlier comments, I feel that potential residents are going to seek more space - and 2-3 bedrooms would be more appropriate. For most of those 55+ trying to downsize going from the average 3000-4000 square foot home to 1000 square feet will not be adequate. As people work from home more they need bedroom and office space. And in talking to local real estate agents, Cohasset is not really a market for Singles looking to move here. I ask that the planning board work with the developers to think through the number of units and the mix/make up of the unit size.

During the meeting I heard the some planning board members argue for increased commercial retail space. I ask the planning board to consider this carefully. 1. Neighbors did not want that. 2. If the business space goes unfilled because there is not a demand, the project could fail with vacant space or the developers may not being able to recoup their investment and not maintain the property.

If however the board is looking to fill the space for more public use, one idea might be for another “workstation concept” (similar to the one by the train station). As more and more professionals and students are home, there may be a market to rent out space to private individuals or in small groups as a way to get away from ones living situation to concentrate on work or school in a dedicated work space.

Those were my only additional thoughts at this point.

Thank you,
Jean Patterson
12 Ledgewood Farm Dr.”

Attachment A

To the members of the planning board,

I am writing to urge the board to think very carefully about the commercial/retail requirement of the HBVOD.

Despite sharing initial enthusiasm for hypothetical harborside businesses, my 25 years as a commercial landlord, commercial real estate investment analyst, and as an owner of 12 restaurants/hospitality businesses nationwide - have compelled me to write to urge extreme caution.

Simply put: If the *non-residential* use mandated by the bylaw is forced upon the current proposal as traditional "commercial" space, these spaces will not just fail economically, but their creation will deflate an already struggling village business district, and likely create a permanent black-eye on our harbor.

Forcing commercial storefront to exist on the harbor, and notably mandating it in the square footage suggested, would add outrageous inventory to a small town where, by all observation, it simply is not needed. This problem is compounded by the extreme seasonality of the location. At best, what might fill these empty spaces might be cheap, private offices, which does not serve the public interest, and won't add to the vibrancy of the harbor.

Instead, I urge the board to use the mandate to ensure uses and spaces that will be accessible to all, are needed and wanted by every resident, and won't hurt the village business district: **A focus on exterior space, waterfront park areas, benches, pathway from the veterans memorial, a seaside promenade navigable by all ages, seasonal kiosks – all things accessible (and affordable) to all residents.**

Please create an outdoor harbor experience... not a consumer experience for just those who can afford it.

Thankfully, the board had the foresight, many months ago, to add two important clauses to the bylaw requiring a certain square footage of space:

- 1) *"Notwithstanding the foregoing, the special permit granting authority may waive this minimum if the Applicant provides sufficient evidence of active uses on the ground floor."*
- 2) The board also wisely opted for "*non-residential*" uses and did not limit itself to "commercial".

I have reviewed the current proposal at length, and I urge the board to view the current proposal in this light - and recognize all the proposed open space as serving the intended purpose. Please mandate that we create an experience that is not consumer-driven, and therefore not ABLE to fail.

The safest bet here is also the best project for ALL residents and will create a destination for locals and visitors – and will help, not hurt, the village economy.

Sincerely,

Doug McGregor

7 Border Street



8/2/2020