

June 16, 2022

To: Wrentham Planning Board

CC: Wrentham Conservation Commission

Wrentham Board of Health

RE: Special Permit Application for Senior Living Development, 20 Hancock Street, Sheldon Meadow

Dear Members of the Board,

We are William and Joudrie Jones, residents of Wrentham, living at 32 Hancock Street, and being an abutter to the proposed development mentioned above. We have followed closely the former applications for developing this land and now find we are again looking at a third set of plans, this edition seeks to build sixteen (16) single house units for Senior Housing. The development also includes removal of the house at 20 Hancock, which will be replaced with an entrance road to said Meadow and wrapping around the back of our property as well. At this time we have several concerns and will be active participants in future zoom meetings.

We are writing this letter, knowing it is early in the review process, but two items that were discussed at your June 1st Public Hearing has us concerned, simply because it seemed to gloss over some of the statements made relative to our property and the proposed retaining wall across our back.

We believe that our property was classified as a "SWAIL", which according to Webster is:

SWAIL – n. Also SWALE, SWELL, SWYLE or SWILE. Definition: A wet hollow, a boggy depression or a miry place in the ground.

Mire – n. a heavy and often deep mud or slush. Adj. Miry

Below is a picture of the Hemlock hedge across the back and down the north side of our property, something that we planted some 25 years ago after we met the land owner, Mr. John Hasenjaeger, of Walpole, and he informed us that he would someday develop the land, removing the house at #20 and putting in a road to the back acreage. At that time, we envisioned that on the 15 acres, we could possibly see 5-6 homes being built. Knowing this meant that we would be a corner lot, so for privacy in went the hemlocks.

Inside the hedge, shown in the picture is the lawn area that has our septic system, a 1500 gallon tank, a distribution box and two long leach fields. This septic system was installed by a local contractor in the late 1980's, went through the entire review process, met all the requirements, passed a perk test and has since then, never had a problem. We have never had any surface water, muddy or boggy conditions, nor anything close to a "miry" surface. In fact, the site drawings submitted, specifically drawing C5-1, clearly shows that our property level is not a wet hollow and that our neighbors and abutters to the Meadow, also are not. The drawing shows a level of 251 across our lot, the Moriarty lot, the Nash lot and the Duggan lot and it shows a level of 257, a six foot rise, only 19 feet from our property lines where the 6' walkway begins.



So what is our concern? Simply put: the proposed change in the elevation of the adjacent property after the said 30,000 yards of fill, or possibly more, is in place and what that will do to the high groundwater in the entire area. Both our lot and the lots of our neighbors, the said Moriarty's, Nash's and Duggan's are surely in some way going to be affected by the possible rise in the groundwater levels. If, in fact, we do experience problems with our septic systems, sometime later, after the developer has long gone and the proposed Senior Living Community is in place, who do we go to for relief? Where is the liability issue to all the abutters, including those at the 1139 West street location?



Several of the homes in this area were built in the early 1800's and rest on fieldstone foundations. As you can see, our home was first sold in 1844 and was built by Rhodes Sheldon sometime in the late 1820' or early 1830's. We and our neighbors are especially proud of our older homes, adding to the historical and agricultural significance of the area.

All of us experience water problems in our basements and have sump pumps installed. The property across from 20 Hancock, next to #35 Hancock, is a wet area that never seems to ever dry out and is drained by a culvert pipe under Hancock Street, adjacent to #20 Hancock. The culvert pipe, however, is higher than most of the wet land, so thus the reason why the wet area is generally wet, breeding mosquitoes galore. The last thing us abutters need is higher groundwater and am looking to those with hydrology expertise to evaluate what the impact the 30,000 yards of fill will have in both areas, 20 Hancock as well as 1139 West.



The above photo is the back edge of our property where the site plans show a “proposed retaining wall, to be designed by others” is to be built. The site plan drawing C5.1 shows the wall at the far end of the photo at 252, 1’ above our 251 level. Mid-way coming back it shows it at 254, three feet above our property and at 256, five feet above our property level at the point where the photo was taken. It then continues half-way behind the Moriarty property at 256, 4.5 feet above their level of 251. It then slopes down to 251.5, 0.5’, 2/3’s of the way behind the Moriarty’s.

The retaining wall has a Strip Drain at 254.5, which includes a 6” perf. pipe at 253.16 and a bottom stone level of 252.5, located across the back of our property, 32 Hancock, but does not extend the rest of the way to the Moriarty property.

Also shown on C5.1 is the surface elevation of the proposed development. The level immediately behind the wall, at its center, is shown to be 255. Then a few feet to 256 and then a few feet further to the final height of 257. This means that the proposed 6’ walk way will be at 257, and then the 22’ wide street surface and then the 10’ of “pavers” or parking spaces and finally units 1 and 2 all at 257 also.



The above photo shows the field behind our property and the view we currently enjoy, where we have seen and photographed deer, coyotes, turkeys, rabbits, raccoons, squirrels, possum and extensive bird life. It has also been common that we have frogs and many small sun turtles in our yard, typical of what thrives in wetland areas.

So picture what this view will be after installing a five foot retaining wall and then ground elevation of two feet to a the walk way, road and parking areas and finally to units 1 -2, houses that are to be 28 feet high. The tops of those buildings will be some 34 feet above our property and only 53' away.

We would like to also mention our concern with the 6' walk way which is some 19' from our property line, but curves out beginning at the Moriarty's property line to within a few feet of their property. The walk way, in some places being some 5 -6' higher than us abutters.

A final comment: It was suggested in a memo from Wade Saucier, Agent of the Wrentham Board of Health, that "The entire project is elevated due to high groundwater. From an abutter's perspective, could the elevated road along units 1-4 be designed at a lower elevation? Possibly locate the garages underneath the houses to lower the street elevation. Redesign stormwater runoff for that section of the road to be independent from the current stormwater designs." His thoughts, as well as ours seem to be in tune and we hope that the board will consider his suggestion in their discussions' with the Developer.

Thank you,

William and Joudrie Jones