

August 6, 2022

To: Wrentham Board of Health
Wrentham Conservation Commission
Wrentham Planning Board

Re: 20 Hancock Street/1139 West Street

As long time residents of Wrentham and caretakers of our historic homes and what they represent-what do these projects mean to us?

The little village known today as Sheldonville, was established in the 17th century as a rural settlement which relied on farming. The houses were simple framed homes and they were constructed with dirt floors which were well pounded. As residents became more prosperous and with the eventual increase in inhabitants, the houses were designed with small cellars, rock foundations and the addition of wood floors. These homes were not luxurious by any means, but they met the needs of those living in the area. By the early 19th century, businesses began to move in. These included a blacksmith shop, general store, post office, school, church, grist mill and two boat building shops. In line with this growth, several new homes were built. They had shallow cellars with field stone foundations and almost all had wood floors. Rhodes Sheldon, founder of the boat building operation, built houses in the area for his family and his craftsmen. One of his boats is housed at the Mystic Seaport Museum.

Today, in the twenty-first century, most of these early homes still exist. This distinguishes the area as an historical and agricultural settlement. Several areas of this village have been preserved as open space due to their natural beauty and their importance as a watershed for several communities to the south. The marshlands are environmentally significant in that they attract all manner of birds and animals.

As residents of the area, we hold true to our shared responsibility as have generations before us, to keep this village one of the unique areas in Wrentham. The proposed construction of two Senior Living communities, currently under review, clearly does not fall in line with the idea of keeping this village unique and historic. Many of the historic homes on Hancock and West Streets are much smaller than the proposed units which will tower over them. This development if approved could undermine fragile foundations, pollute the aquifer and cause irreparable harm to the environment and quality of life that the residents former and present have tried to protect for many centuries.

Attached are some photos and comments by direct abutters to this project. As concerned homeowners and proud inhabitants of this unique village we appreciate your taking the time to review these. If this project is built, the consequences foreseen and unforeseen will be long lasting and possibly devastating. We do believe that we are at a crossroads in Wrentham. Extreme care should be taken when developments such as these are proposed. If the effects of climate change were not apparent earlier, the devastating news in recent weeks, should make it very clear to all that environmental and engineering models long thought to be settled science may need more than a second look.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,
Joudrie and Bill Jones
32 Hancock St.
Dyan Rook
1170 West St.



Alex and Diane Lyon

We have lived here since 1992.

Our basement regularly floods every spring and late fall. Recently, flooding has occurred in the summer with the odd weather patterns we are experiencing.

In 1997, I needed to expand the drain pipe network under the basement floor. The previous owner only did half the basement (Ed and Barbara Ligon). The half system was not adequate to handle the water that flooded the basement. With my expanded drainage pipes under the new concrete floor, the pump cannot handle the volume of water during heavy rains. This occurs in the late winter and early spring. In addition to the expanded drainage, I needed to install a 16" high block wall to prevent the stone foundation wall from being undermined by the water that was flooding the basement. I can provide pictures of this modification upon request.

My concern with the new development is that the impervious surfaces, the weight of the extra fill, and new roadways and homes, will cause the natural flow of water to be restricted and therefore back up in directions that cannot be predicted.

This proposed site is located in an aquifer protection zone. I feel the Board of Health needs to give these proposed developments extra consideration to protect the abutting historic properties, especially with regard to the location of the retention ponds on abutting property lines.



William and Joudrie Jones

The parcel of land that our home rests on was purchased from James Gilmore on November 11, 1834 by Rhodes and Prushia Sheldon. They built our house and eight others in the immediate area in the years 1835-1840, to house workers at their boat building company located on West Street. We are the fifteenth owners of this home.

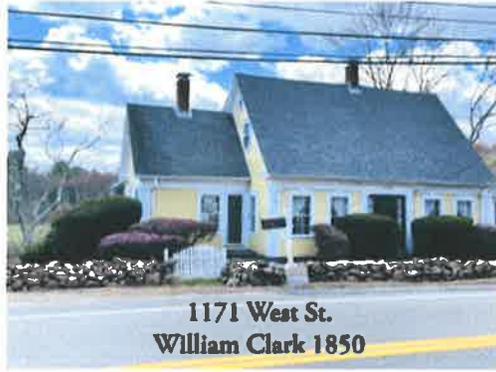
Our foundation is the field stone style. Field stone foundations, properly built can be one of the most structurally sound foundations out there. Now, because of the porous nature of the mortar and the stone, stone foundations tend to "weep" when the water table is higher. Due to their composition and lack of uniformity, stone foundations are more likely to have problems when mortar crumbles due to water or even just time. It is well known that all stones are absorbent and retain water to some degree, this is typical and water can find cracks or holes within the stones or mortar of 100 plus year old basement walls.

We re-mortared the field stone walls, poured in a 6" cement floor and covered both surfaces with a waterproofing, as well as installing a sump pump well. Even after all of that work, we realized that stone is a durable material, but it is not strong enough to withstand water pressure due to rises in water tables. After 52 years of battling this, we still find that the water pressure is successful and our sump pump is tested.

Living near a natural wetland has always concerned us when major rainfalls, large storms and huge snow melts occur. The level of water levels in this area are normally high and introducing a large amount of fill such as the 30,000 yards being estimated in the proposed Sheldon Meadows application, can undoubtedly raise that level. The increase of the fill alone, is proposed to take the ground level of the road and house surfaces in the Sheldon Meadows, some 6 feet above our lands current level, which will undoubtedly cause us water problems with our basement as well as yard.

On very rare occasions do we ever have surface water, but with the proposed Sheldon Meadows, common sense only tells us that things will get much worse. We believe that a Certified Hydrologist needs to review the plans and ensure us and others that the proposed development will not cause us and our neighbors problems in the future. We have little doubts, that a few years down the road, that we will have problems and no recourse will be available to all of us in the Sheldonville Community but to go to the Town for some resolution.

The area we live in is a very sensitive habitat for hundreds of species of aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals. The natural creation of these wetlands provides values no other ecosystem can. This also includes natural water quality, flood protection and availability for recreational and aesthetic appreciation for us at no cost. All this can be destroyed by human disturbances such as altering the ground levels for construction purposes. Filling in wetlands, the water that made them wet, has to go somewhere. If it isn't seeping back into the basements of the houses in the area, then leaking into formerly dry houses of property owners. This is important to understand and gives many of the Abutters to such construction greatly concerned for their homes and the dangers that high water tables may cause.



Janet Sozio

My house has a field stone foundation and cement for the garage as that has been added later. The cement support for the garage has shifted and cracked over the years due to settling but also due to the amount of water flowing under my property. The house is shifting as well and since the great rainstorms we had a 4-5 years ago, I can't open one of my windows in my sun porch as there has been more shifting.

I have sump pumps in the basement and there is a cement trench in the floor with a drainage pipe that empties out into the garage. There are drains at the bottom of my driveway to handle the run off from the street. They drain into my yard. Sometimes they get overwhelmed and water backs up into my garage and if severe enough continues to back up into the basement. Water also seeps up from the ground through cracks in the basement floor or cascades down the side of the basement wall. Seepage and cascades happen when the ground can't absorb the water fast enough due to heavy rainfall or "fast" rainfall. Mold forms quickly as well.

To remedy, I spent \$6500 on a "Basement Technologies" system. I knew if I'd be going through sump pumps like candy so I went for it and forked over the cash. While this has done wonders to keep my basement dry, it is not a perfect system and can't prevent water from seeping or cascading down the walls, it just serves to redirect it out of the basement so I don't have puddles and mold. I also pay \$250/year to keep the fancy system in my basement serviced and free of issues.

There are low points of my yard where all the water runs off from the street. It also can't drain as fast as other portions. If there are not active puddles, there is a lot of "squelch/squish" going on! It can take a day or so for all of it to absorb. I even get puddles along the stone wall in front of my house.

Also, I have had a few stonewall "blow outs" and "bleeds" where water has caused either the stones to shift or the dirt/crushed stone, etc in between to be flushed out.

Because of the amount of fill they need to truck in, I am very concerned that even despite their fancy calculations (which are at the VERY MINIMUM of the continuum they need to be at...for example if a guideline says between 2'-4', they are at 2) that I am being put in a "valley" situation. I do not trust the retaining walls to hold (they are introducing water behind the wall by installing a "strip drain" at the top of the walls) and there is no information about how surface water from the properties will be conveyed. I called my home insurance company and shared the information with them. Given the propensity to take on even more water since my yard will no longer be draining "down hill" but instead collecting water in a valley, I will need to purchase flood insurance which is \$7000/year. The company I am insured with is USAA, I mention this only because 1, I have been with them for all types of products including insurance for over 30 years and 2, they serve the military community and ALWAYS have the soldiers and their families in mind. They are not in the business to sell a product to improve their bottom line. Therefore I trust that when they say in order to protect my property and home, that flood insurance is critical, that they are telling me honestly and not just trying to sell me a product!

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Tim and Jean Heinz

Our antique was home built in the early 1830's by William Grant. and first sold in 1842.

We have a field stone foundation and a sump pump in our basement like many of our neighbors, because he have a high water table in our area.

Our concerns are the increase of water due to the large amount of fill being introduced in Sheldon Meadows. We are also concerned about the swamp next to our home, with the increase of water cascading down the purposed roadway and snow removal.

Kate Duggan,
58 Hancock Street



Built in 1835

This home has a field stone foundation. There's evidence of stream like conditions in my basement when it heavily rains. This will get worse with the quantity of houses proposed.

There is a pit the basement where the water drains into and then recedes.

There's an intermittent stream on the property and it really swells during heavy rains

We foresee greater water problems in the future if the proposed community is built. There will be less surface area to absorb the water. Despite the developers amazing engineering, water issues cannot be 100% prevented with less surface area. $1+1 = 2$ and what the developer is proposing doesn't add up despite their calculations.