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Conservation Commission by e-mail to [concom@wrentham.gov](mailto:concom@wrentham.gov)  
79 South Street  
Wrentham, MA 02093

RE: Sheldon Meadow Senior Living Community (SLC) (20 Hancock Street)  
Sheldon West Senior Living Community (SLC) (1139 West Street)

Dear Chair Immonen, Members of the Commission and Agent Luce:

I am writing on behalf of myself and my wife Dyan Rook, 43-year residents of 1170 West Street, Sheldonville. As new information comes in, and the Commission proceeds with its review, we ask that you give careful consideration to the following issues, among many others. While addressing technical and design issues is important and necessary, we believe that it is equally important and necessary to keep sight of the “big picture” — the risks created by these particular projects as designed, at these particular locations. To us, it remains basic “calculus of risk” — Where the likelihood of adverse impacts may be small, but the consequences of the impacts are severe or even catastrophic, it is only prudent to err on the side of caution. These sites are unusual in Wrentham, perhaps unique, with respect to possible adverse impacts. We do not believe that allowing these projects to be built is a gamble Wrentham should take.

1. At the Commission’s meeting on November 3, 2022, it received a comprehensive update from Chuck Adelsberger of Environmental Partners with respect to the site feasibility study for the much-needed West Wrentham Town Well. Initially, four “finalist” sites were selected, three of which are on Burnt Swamp Road just south of the project sites. According to Mr. Adelsberger, the Marszalkowski site, on the northerly side of Burnt Swamp Road and directly abutting the project sites, appears to be the “optimal site” at this time, in part because of favorable hydrogeology and high potential yield.

What happens on these two proposed project sites directly affects not only the public drinking water supply of the 130,000 customers of the Pawtucket Water Supply Board (PWSB), but now possibly the public drinking water supply of the Town of Wrentham if

the “optimal site” becomes the location of the West Wrentham Well. Of particular concern is the fact that the applicant proposes to truck in nearly 70,000 cubic yards of fill, from unknown locations, of unknown quality and purity, and with unknown controls in place.

Also of concern is that each of the proposed SLCs will be serviced by just one community septic system (the details of which have not been provided) located in the center of each ring of units. If either of those septic systems fails, the pollution will be much greater than would be the case if a septic system serving just one unit failed. Both of these concerns were also raised by the PWSB in its letter dated July 28, 2022. My personal experience with Homeowners Associations has been that they are often financially strapped, and not always willing or able to maintain infrastructure the way it should be maintained. And, also as PWSB pointed out, how and by whom will all of this be monitored? And the ultimate question remains: If something goes wrong, who is stuck cleaning up the mess?

2. We still do not see any evidence that the likely anticipated effects of climate change have been considered, as the Commission’s Rules and Regulations require. There can be little doubt that the future will bring more extreme weather events, increased rainfall, and more flooding. It is no longer adequate to use existing models to simply plan for the 100-year storm event. The rainfall and flooding that destroyed Norwood Hospital in 2020 did not rise to the level of the 100-year storm, but rather dumped several inches of rain in just a few hours.

I do not claim to be an environmental scientist. I did, however, review the website Risk Factor (<https://riskfactor.com>), a site created by the non-profit First Street Foundation to estimate risks of flooding (and other impacts) to particular properties, and resulting from climate change. Risk Factor is often used by insurance companies and other underwriters. According to its website, its flood model is “a nationwide, probabilistic flood model that shows any location’s risk of flooding from rain, rivers, tides and storm surge. It builds off decades of peer-reviewed research and forecasts how flood risks will change over time due to changes in the environment.”

For the 20 Hancock Street, based upon the property’s projected likelihood and depth of flooding reaching the existing building, the site was deemed to have a “major flood factor risk.” The report states that: “Within the next 30 years, this property has a **94%** chance of flood water reaching the building at least once.” (The one-year risk is 8%; the five-year risk is 40%; the ten-year risk is 61%; the 15-year risk is 75%; the 20-year risk is 83%; and the 25-year risk is 90%.) And this projection uses existing conditions, not taking into account the effects of the proposed filling, grade changes and alteration of existing drainage patterns. As a layman, this raises a big red flag and suggests to me that the proposed units, as well as abutting properties, will be at considerable risk, and that risk should be comprehensively evaluated **before** putting 25 new units and the existing Hancock Street neighborhood in the cross-hairs.

No flood factor risk was assigned for 1139 West Street because there is no **existing** structure on the site, but it seems reasonable to assume that the flooding risks are and will be comparable.

Once again, we thank the Commission and other reviewing Boards for its careful review of these applications.

Very truly yours,

/s/

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