



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE

SENATOR CINDY F. FRIEDMAN
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Chair
JOINT COMMITTEE ON
HEALTH CARE FINANCING

Vice Chair
SENATE COMMITTEE ON
WAYS AND MEANS

February 24, 2021

Arlington Board of Zoning of Appeals
51 Grove Street
Arlington, MA 02476

RE: Thorndike Place at the Mugar Wetlands

Dear Sirs:

I write to reiterate my strong opposition to the proposed Thorndike Place development at the site in East Arlington owned by the Mugar Family. This site serves as a critical area of flood retention that has helped mitigate the constant flooding that occurs in this neighborhood. Without it, it is clear that the neighborhood will experience increased levels of flooding further jeopardizing their homes, safety and health. The problem is only exacerbated by the effects of climate change which we now understand causes greater and more often severe weather events. Increased storm activity will also affect the already fragile Amelia Earhart Dam. A breach of the Dam will cause the Alewife Brook to back up and will in turn have an additional negative impact on a neighborhood already experiencing serious flooding.

I understand that the developer has offered to donate a piece of the land to the Town. Besides the fact that the wet land being offered has had waste dumped on it for decades and now is home to an ever-growing homeless population, it does not in any way mitigate the problems that a development like the one being proposed will impose on the neighborhood, town and ecosystem of the area.

In addition, while the traffic issues along Lake Street and the surrounding narrow feeder streets have been lessened during the pandemic, the bumper-to-bumper traffic and high-speed cut throughs through

our neighborhoods will become an even greater reality and problem for neighbors once the pandemic is over if this development is built.

I am a proponent of smart development and transit-oriented housing. Allowing any housing to be built regardless of whether or not an area can environmentally sustain it without causing hardship to the greater community, however, is neither smart nor wise. And having been involved in this issue for quite some time, I do not believe any conditions that the town may put on the developers will be enough to mitigate the harm the project will cause.

My office has worked on this issue since I became a Senator and before that I was involved as chief of staff to the late Senator Donnelly. As a private citizen and town meeting member I voted against the project at least three times. Nothing I have seen so far has changed that position.

It is time to come to a decision to clean up the site, make it an educational place for children to learn about their environment and climate change, and move on.

I truly appreciate the serious consideration that you are bringing to this project. Thank you for your time and commitment and I urge you to reject the Thorndike Place project proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cindy F. Friedman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cindy F. Friedman
State Senator
4th Middlesex