

Whitten, Lauren

From: Cox <jstephens59@cox.net>
Sent: Thursday, July 14, 2022 12:43 PM
To: Whitten, Lauren
Subject: Tonight's Public Hearing of 1297 Enfield Street

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I request that this email be included in tonight's P&Z packet. Thanks.
Judy Stephens

Proposal for Special Development District (SDD) Zone Change from HR-33

I am Judith Stephens of 1346 Enfield Street in Enfield, and am currently isolating as has Covid has hit a family member else I would be in attendance on 7/14 for the Public Hearing.

I am in total opposition to changing the zoning for this one property from HR-33 to SDD and will address each of my reasons below.

1. FAIR SHARE HOUSING:

According to the Plan of Conservation & Development, of 169 CT towns only 30 have met the goal of 10% or more in affordable housing availability. Enfield is one of the 30 at 12.72%; therefore, we are providing more than our fair share. Currently, the establishment of the Thompsonville District and its incentives to promote more growth and affordable housing negates a need for even more. Our population is decreasing and family size has decreased with it.

2. HISTORIC DISTRICT:

Many homes are on the State and National Historic Registers. Those of us in this District must adhere to special rules and restrictions. There are no monetary incentives offered to us (although keeping up historic properties is far more costly than that of R-33 homes). We keep the Route 5 sidewalks cleared of snow and ice as well as mowing and keeping clear the state-owned land abutting the sidewalks, at our own expense. This non-reimbursable cost we pay because we respect our District and its historical significance.

3. THE PROPERTY IN QUESTION:

The beginnings of Enfield, Longview Estate, is its focal point. It was built and maintained by Orrin Thompson, for whom Thompsonville was named. Its tree belt of large, stately, old trees and sloping grassy lawn served as the town common and parade ground and is a visual treasure for all who pass. It is the heart of Enfield.

I take note that in the Town of Enfield's "Community Character of its Historical & Cultural Resources Report," the Historic District HR-33 covers only 293 acres or 1.3% —a very small portion—of Enfield's land. Also noted that HR-33 differs from R-33 "in that it does not permit some senior housing complexes or duplexes by special permit."

4. SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT DESIGNATION

As stated in Sec. 5.60 of our Zoning Regulations, "Its sole purpose was created for adaptive reuse of vacant, deteriorating, or underutilized buildings. Any land use is permitted with the approval of the Commission with a plan for the restoration of a building." This is far more than that!

From Sec. 8.60 of the zoning regulations, "The Enfield/King Street Design Overlay District" is designed to promote the character and scale of an historic New England town along that corridor. Design standards control development in relation to the existing historic character."

There are 8 criteria for an SDD and ALL of them must be met, which this property does not. An entity cannot just pick and choose which ones work with its own interpretation. There are to be no new buildings until all existing structures have been fully rehabilitated and Certificates of Occupancy issued for each. Additions shall follow the dimensional setback requirements of the underlying zoning district.

I take special note to information I found in the "Enfield Historic Districts Boundaries," which states that the Historic District on the east side begins from Route 5 east no farther than 250 feet, with only 2 exceptions in the District. One is 1489 Enfield Street with a 300 foot depth and the other is the Orrin Thompson house within the Felician Sisters complex, where the District boundary is 525 feet east from Route 5! I recall that applicant's representatives referred to the setback boundary as about 200 feet or so. Has the boundary for this particular area on the site been changed through a variance??

(See lhdct.org, District Boundary) The boundary also cites the definition of "Rear property line" as the line delineated on the deed or map describing such home or real property and designating the furthest (sic) eastern or western point from Enfield Street." (See Town website-District Ordinance)

5. INFRASTRUCTURE/TRAFFIC/HIGH DENSITY:

The 2016 Traffic Study that was done saw no increase in traffic that would affect Enfield Street. It would be interesting to know what month that study occurred. Did it take place after school had begun in September 2016 after the high schools had combined or prior to that? Timing of the study is crucial, since the projections forward are based on those numbers.

I also note the repeated reference to the impact to South Road, Post Office Road, and Enfield Street. Nothing about the traffic to/from Bridge Lane. Living at the corner of Enfield Street and Bridge Lane, I can attest to how congested these streets have become. With the physical convergence of the property in question, South Road, the church, the EMS garage, and the schools, added to the unacceptable increase in traffic on Bridge Lane with school buses, who are using the schools' old emergency gates routinely now—and town vehicles, town employees' vehicles, large trucks, trucks with flatbeds carrying heavy construction equipment, boats, etc. All of this happening on a narrow residential roadway, aptly named Bridge LANE, whose width cannot handle this amount of traffic already. There are no sidewalks for pedestrians, children, baby carriages, joggers, or dog walkers. I witness daily large vehicles needing to use the entire width as their turning radius. Buses side by side fill the street to the curbs. At the peak times of each day when school bus traffic and WPC traffic converge, vehicles become backed up. What happens if there is a sudden need for access by emergency services? A 6-year old traffic study doesn't address any of this because the conditions didn't exist. The traffic study used is obsolete and the projections based on inaccurate information.

6. WATER/SEWER/EMERGENCY SERVICES:

I agree that each of these would face much heavier demand, as participants at the September meeting pointed out. The applicant's rep inferred that there wouldn't be a major impact in these because at one time 400 nuns lived on the grounds is a non-comparison to a couple of hundred families living there.

7. CHANGING COMMUNITY NEEDS:

Felician representatives have repeatedly reminded us that we must understand that the needs of the community change and we should be open to that. I agree and, as such (since Enfield is doing its fair share in meeting the community's changing needs), I believe it is time for the Felician Community to face the change of need within its own community. In last July's presentation we were told there were 32 of their members remaining on this site, mainly elderly persons, then the number dropped last September to the current number of 24. In all of North America there are only about 700 left in their community.

At what point does staying on this property lack viability for them? Evidently, to want desperately to make such drastic changes to Enfield's Historic District, that time for them is now. But, though the time may be right for them, it will never be the right time—and more importantly—the right location for their proposed vision. I believe it was stated that they

would never sell the chapel. No such assurances have been made about the rest of the property, just that it's their intention to remain involved for 100 years. I'm also unclear as to the property ownership. There's been reference made to a lease as well as ownership where the Community Builders and the Felician Sisters Trust are both referenced. The vision is wonderful. The intention is wonderful. The past and present contribution to the community by the Felicians is wonderful. But, there are all sorts of people out there who are not so wonderful. This zone change for a single property within the Historic District would not only be permanent, but sets a precedent and leaves our District totally unprotected giving free rein to future developers creating the opposite effect of its original intent.

A vote in favor of this is a total contradiction to Enfield's Plan for Conservation & Development and will destroy our Historical District.

Please VOTE NO on this.

Thank you.
Judy Stephens

Sent from my iPhone

