

October 14, 2015

Dear Members of the Durham Planning Board,

It is likely I will not be able to attend tonight's public hearing. I would like to express my enthusiastic support for John Randall's Harmony Homes Project. This has been a tricky piece of land to develop given all its environmental constraints and gateway/river aesthetic concerns. We are fortunate to have Mr. Randall's proposal come forward for 2-3 single-story assisted living buildings. The use will serve the community well; the low traffic count will please NHDOT; and the low-lying architecture will help to insure that the project meet the DBP Design Guidelines. The Durham Business Park Design Committee has met with the architectural team several times to work on architectural details. The team has been very responsive to feedback and has continued to refine their design.

We are also fortunate to have the buildings sited toward the back of the property allowing for preservation of much of the meadow viewscape from Rt. 4 and the Johnson Creek Bridge. The 11-acre front meadow will remain open, which again will help address the DBP Design Guidelines regarding preserving significant viewsheds. With the low-lying buildings nestled into the property (and the riverside being mostly cedar-clad), the view from the river (as shown in the computer models) is handsome and far less imposing than the 3-story buildings proposed earlier. Additionally, the views of the Oyster River by the residents will be appreciated I am sure. It makes for a lovely setting with its waterfront views and walking trails.

There are a few remaining items that I believe have not yet been fully flushed out:

It is difficult for the layman to understand the landscaping plan. There are 3 renderings (that I know of) posted online. Plans #1 and #2 seem to be earlier renderings without much detail. The most recent, dated 9/17, is a close-up of the back landscaping and excludes information about the relationship of the landscaping in context to Rt. 4 and the Johnson Creek Bridge views. Online, it is also hard to determine, what is being planted where. Having been on the Peak Landscaping Remediation Team, I would prefer we attend to these important details ahead of time.

a) Given the mandate to preserve significant viewsheds from Rt. 4, Johnson Creek and the Oyster River, I wonder if the landscaping provides year-round buffers? I see a lovely stand of birch which will serve the community well 6 months of the year. In order to meet the DBP Guidelines, I am hoping there will also be year-round evergreen screening for the 20,000 passers-byers driving along Rt. 4.

b) On one of the earlier Landscaping Plans, there is a parking lot depicted in front of Building #3. I wonder if this parking lot will be built before Building #3 is in place. If so, I note there is no screening from the Rt. 4/Johnson Creek viewshed of parked cars. If the answer is no, then the building itself will shield the parking.

c) Relatively late in the process, a 70-foot barn appeared in the plans. The original small shed/barn for 1 or 2 horses has become a large barn, which will be *the most prominent visual element* on the property as seen from Rt. 4 and the Johnson Creek Bridge. (Is such a large

structure necessary?) There has been little attention given to this very prominent visual element by the Committee and no discussion regarding plans to provide a vegetative buffer from Rt. 4 and the Johnson Creek Bridge. The barn is much closer to the road and more prominent than the assisted living buildings. I see no landscaping details on the plan to address this. Also, I believe there is talk of painting the barn red. While barn red is an obvious choice, depending on the shade of red and whether it is paint or stain, this could heighten the presence of this added structure which is large and at this point, has no vegetative buffer. A softer, more muted red stain or a natural wood-sided building would help the barn to not dominant the surroundings (which is yet another stated objective of the DBP Design Guidelines).

d) I believe I heard there is a plan for 4 parking spaces in front of the barn (i.e. between the barn and Rt. 4. I am not sure why 4 spaces are needed but if they are to be there, there should be some attention given to screening the parked cars.

Thank you for considering these matters. I am hoping that the Public Hearing will remain open so there will be an opportunity for the public to weigh in on the evolving building and landscaping designs. This is an extremely important project for our town.

Thank you.

Beth