

March 17, 2022

Dear Members of the Planning Board:

Two weeks ago, along with the horrendous news from Ukraine, our news sources were awash with talk about the newly released report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a body of experts convened by the United Nations. The report was the most comprehensive current consideration of the threats we face from global warming. The experts who wrote it concluded that the effects of climate change are occurring more rapidly than predicted and that the window of opportunity to avert great disaster is closing.

I can't help but think what folly -- perhaps "how gravely irresponsible" would be a better descriptor -- that we are facing a proposal to "develop" property in our town by razing an urban forest. Without a moment's consideration of any other factors, the destruction of such a *precious* resource in the center of town should be sufficient to say no to the Murphys' proposed parking lot.

But there are other factors: If common sense and environmental responsibility are not sufficient grounds to reject this proposal, we can turn to our town's regulations for guidance.

From Article VII, 175-23 Approval Criteria:

2. External impacts:

The external impacts of the proposed use on abutting properties and the neighborhood shall be no greater than the impacts of adjacent existing uses of other uses permitted in the zone. This shall include, but not be limited to, *traffic, noise*, odors, vibrations, dust, fumes, *hours of operation, and exterior lighting and glare*. In addition, the location, nature, design, and height of the structure and its appurtenances, its scale with reference to its surroundings, and the nature and intensity of the use, *shall not have an adverse effect on the surrounding environment* nor discourage the appropriate and orderly development and use of land and buildings in the neighborhood (emphasis added).

5. Preservation of natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources:

- The proposed use of the site, including all related development activities, *shall preserve identified natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources on the site and shall not degrade such identified resources on abutting properties*. This shall include, but not be limited to, identified wetlands, floodplains, *significant wildlife habitat*, stonewalls, *mature tree lines*, cemeteries, graveyards, designated historic buildings or sites, *scenic views*, and viewsheds. (emphasis added)

6. Impact on property values:

- The proposed use will not cause or contribute to a significant decline in property values of adjacent properties.

As already documented in numerous citizen comments, the Murphys' proposal fails to meet these criteria. See among others, letters posted on March 17, 2022, by forest ecologist, Richard Hallet, and direct abutter Sandy Urso.

Please exercise the authority granted to you responsibly and reject the parking lot project as currently proposed.

Sincerely,
Deborah Hirsch Mayer
19 Garden Lane
Durham, NH