

Deborah Hirsch Mayer  
19 Garden Lane  
Durham, NH  
August 10, 2022

Dear Planning Board Members:

I live in the Faculty Neighborhood of Durham approximately three pedestrian blocks from the back end of the proposed construction.

I will not take the time or space to reiterate the many ways in which the proposed plan for building a parking lot/structure in the back of 19-21 Main Street does not meet several of the Conditional Use Criteria and should therefore not be approved.

You have received numerous letters from citizens and from people with professional expertise who live in, know, and care about our town.

I listened in wonder as you began discussing the Conditional Use Criteria and how they are or are not met by this proposed project. I wondered whether you read or if having read, retained, the information that has been presented to you regarding environmental concerns including the deleterious effects of destroying a precious downtown urban forest, noise, glare, wildlife habitat disruption, and increased traffic in our downtown core, the latter specifically being antithetical to the goals and vision of our Master Plan and to responsible environmental stewardship more generally.

I was taken aback during your deliberations as you've seemingly ignored points raised by your own colleagues on the Planning Board, rushed through topics, dismissed the opinions of professionals in part by questioning their expertise, rarely referenced the substantial public input that has been sent to you outside of your actual meetings, and ignored or waved away various town regulations, criteria, and language that you've deemed unhelpful to the conclusions you seem to want to draw.

I would not want to be in your place: The amount of time and the knowledge needed to fully immerse yourselves in the details of this proposal and the myriad effects it will have on land, animals, and people is overwhelming. Learning beyond your own expertise, reading all the submissions, and sorting through them is an immense task. I thank you for your willingness to serve on this board while worrying that you have not been able to devote sufficient time to read, digest, and grapple with the widespread impacts this project will have if approved.

I am concerned by the discussions I've witnessed. I know that Durham is eager to embrace development generally, but I can't help but wonder based on what I've heard whether there is a predetermined stance on the part of many board members to approve this project. It pains me to write that, and I am open to having my perceptions changed, but that is how it seems. I would like to see new development in our town – development that aligns with our Master Plan, is consistent with our Site Plan Regulations and our Conditional Use Criteria, and that enhances our town, protects, and draws on our environmental resources, and benefits our citizens. This proposal does not seem to meet those criteria. I urge you to reject it.

Sincerely,  
Deborah Hirsch Mayer