

**From:** [Michael Behrendt](#)  
**Subject:** Main Street #19 - The neighbors & the noise - email from Josh Meyrowitz  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 16, 2020 6:46:08 PM

---

To the Planning Board,  
Please see the email from Josh Meyrowitz below.

### **Michael Behrendt**

Durham Town Planner  
Town of Durham  
8 Newmarket Road  
Durham, NH 03824  
(603) 868-8064  
[www.ci.durham.nh.us](http://www.ci.durham.nh.us)

**From:** Joshua Meyrowitz [mailto:prof.joshua.meyrowitz@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 16, 2020 3:45 PM  
**To:** Michael Behrendt  
**Subject:** 19-21 Main: The neighbors & the noise

Hi Michael,

**Neighbor Silence:** You refer in your Planner's Review to no word from an abutter to the proposed Church Hill parking mound. I'm not sure whether you know that Peter Andersen has been diagnosed with advanced liver cancer and is fighting for his life. Thus, it's unlikely that you would be hearing from him or his family in any usual manner in the near future.

But Peter's views on the parking mound idea were stated quite clearly and vigorously during preliminary design review -- and the current plan is worse on the dimensions that he mentioned (the looming structure looking down on his house and into his windows). The mound/wall is 10 feet or more taller than originally proposed. (14' retaining wall mentioned by Sievert in late 2019/early 2020; now up to 25').

I think the "high bar" the PB referred to on Jan 8 was misunderstood by the Toomerfs and Sievert to mean: "Build it ever higher!"

I hope that the PB will press Sievert to reveal such basic things as the dimensions of the parking field, which he told me orally was still about 1.3 acres and the same area as a football field. Thus, I think this is the new comparison to Berlin Wall and Israeli-Palestinian separation barrier (and Town Hall):

For comparison scale, the ceiling of our tall Town Hall chamber is “only” 12’ 4’ high, and the average height of the Berlin Wall was only 11.8 feet. The Sievert Wall & parking mound would now be more than 100% taller than the Town Hall chambers and the Berlin Wall. And that’s before the added height of vehicles, drivers, & lampposts. All told, there will likely be new structures about 40’ high – about 50% taller than the height of the tallest Israeli/Palestinian Separation Barrier [and close to 100%’ taller than the Atrium ceiling when one enters Town Hall.] And remember that what is proposed is to build up 22’ or taller asphalt-top parking mound on ground that is *already* at least 30’ above the level of the Chesley Marsh & College Brook downhill from it. Also, the plan diagram shows a football-field size width about 6 times wider than the 29’-wide Council Chamber room.

**Echoes:** Peter Andersen also mentioned how sound of voices and cars echoes from parking lots (such as Church Hill apartments).

**Noise for decades, not months:** Regarding sound, you mention in the site-walk minutes that I asked about noise abatement from the use of the parking lot and that Mike S said there was nothing to address that in the plan. At the site walk, I mentioned engines, horns, car alarms, plows, voices, etc. (It will be a tempting skateboard site, with the clacking of the boards at the end of each run, based on what we see around town).

Yet, in your Planner's Review, you make it sound (no pun intended) that I was speaking only about construction noise. Also a problem, but I was speaking about noise for the next century and more.

Also, if you lived on Chesley, you'd know that there's a weird acoustic echo effect, where noise from in front and behind the Andersen house (and from people speaking or playing music walking up the hill) echoes into my house as if it is *IN* my house. I've had visitors jump in fear that someone just rear-ended

their car in my driveway from a car door closing across the street.

I don't see how this plan addresses any of the concerns raised by Board members and the public in preliminary design review, except the addition of some trees on the parking field and attempting to hide the 25' wall, and that there there's a 100' buffer at Chesley Rear (but a much taller wall!), and there would have been a 70' buffer or heavy screening requirement from the stone wall and wetland in any case.

Best, j m

*Joshua Meyrowitz, Ph.D.*

*Professor Emeritus*

*Department of Communication*

*Horton Social Science Center*

*University of New Hampshire*

*Durham NH 03824-2616*

*603-862-3031 – 24-hr voice mail; 603-868-5090 – Home*

*[Prof.Joshua.Meyrowitz@gmail.com](mailto:Prof.Joshua.Meyrowitz@gmail.com)*

*<https://unh.academia.edu/JoshuaMeyrowitz>*

*NOTE: I rarely check "Messenger" or Facebook*