

When the leaves are down on Church Hill Woods

To the Planning Board from Joshua Meyrowitz, May 25, 2021

Dear Members of the Planning Board,

Thank you for agreeing to start at Chesley Drive for the Wednesday, May 26, 2021, Site Walk for the Church Hill Woods proposed parking structure.

As we hope you understand, for direct abutters and the adjacent neighborhood, the Chesley Drive, Mill Plaza, and Smith Park Lane sides of the proposal are the FRONT of the subject lots (1-15 and 1-16). Those two lots are the ones that would be most transformed in elevation, overall topography, and appearance if this proposal is allowed to proceed.

Moreover, as residents have long argued, these two lots are legally separate from lots 1-9 and 1-10 (19 & 21 Main St) and also very far from, and barely visible, from Main Street. **But they are the very prominent FRONTS of the property from Chesley Drive, Mill Plaza, and 5 Smith Park Lane.**

At this time of year (toward end of May), the leaves are in. During the other half of the year, one could have seen from Chesley Dr & Mill Plaza the whole expanse – the old stone walls, up through the Andersen and Urso properties up to the Red Tower and the Community Church.



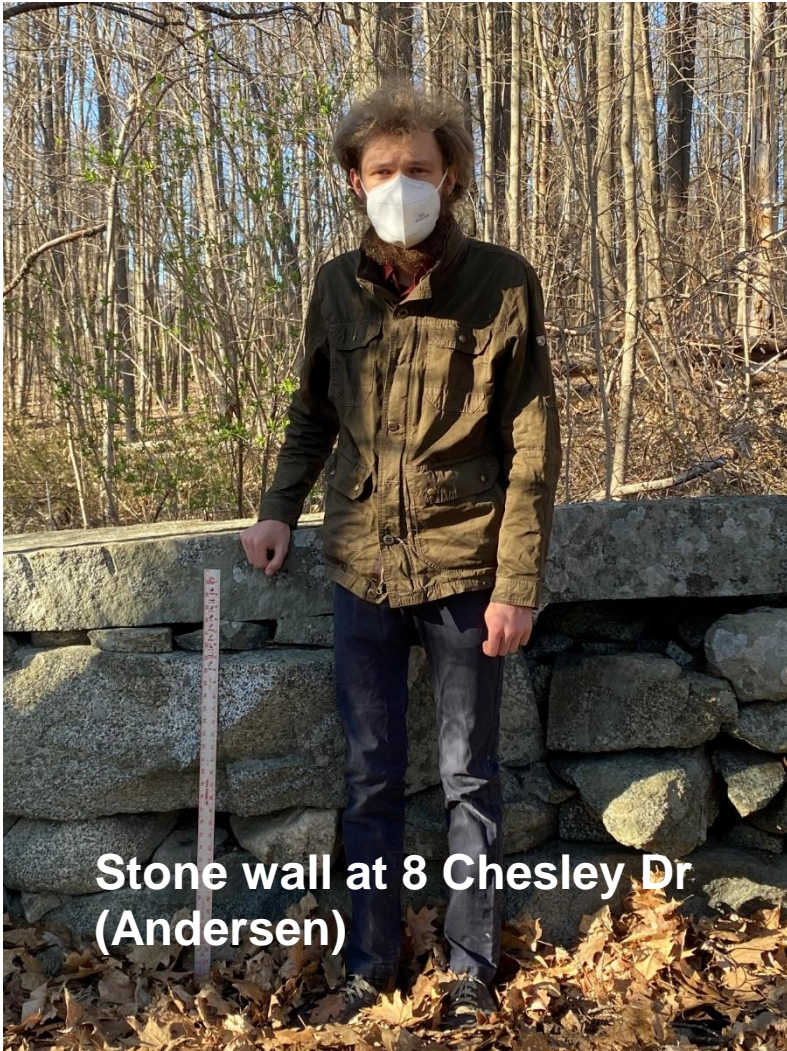
Looking up to 19 Main (Red Tower)



Looking up toward 5 Smith Park Ln

Now, the Church Hill Woods and surrounds are prettier than they were during the winter, but less transparent. And although one can better grasp now what would be lost in beauty and in visual and acoustic buffering if the woods are destroyed, one also needs more mental energy to understand the winter viewscapes and the relationship among the properties. I hope the few images I provide here help.

**Even at most solid parts,
old wall only about 3 ft high.**



**Stone wall at 8 Chesley Dr
(Andersen)**



5 Smith Pk (Urso)

**And land rises sharply behind
old wall, which would make 20? ft
proposed parking mound fully
visible.**

**In other sections, old wall
barely rises above ground.**



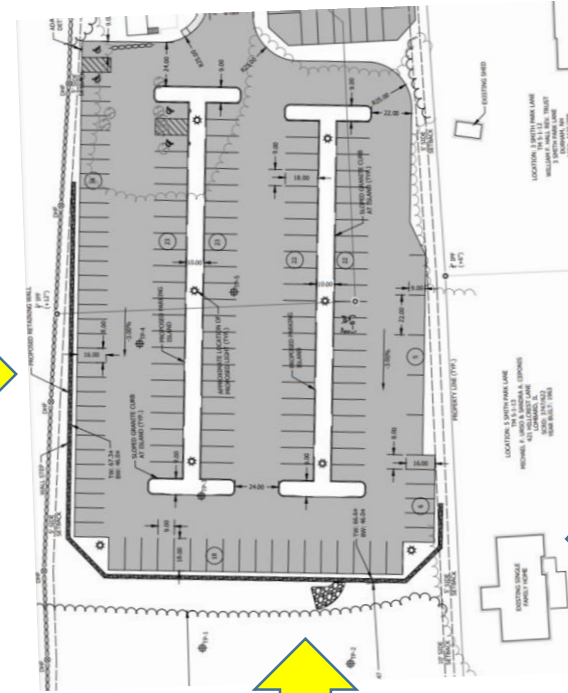
**Stone wall above
Chesley Marsh (Andersen)**

Missing Visual & *Measurement* Information for Planning Board to assess whether *original* plan was really “surface parking”

Per [Planner's Review 4-14-21](#), Toomerfs had yet to provide basic information to Planning Board and public:

- “profile (elevation) drawings of... **three sides**. This is indispensable information.”
- “longitudinal profile from Main Street to Chesley Drive, or preferably Faculty Road, ***showing the continuous final ground elevation***. This would help clarify how visible the vehicles and lights would be from nearby properties.”

MISSING view from Mill Plaza



MISSING view from Smith Pk Ln

MISSING view from Chesley Drive

Planning Board and public need to see parking-structure renderings from abutting Mill Plaza...

where the mound would be at *ground level* and with only a proposed *FIVE FOOT setback!*



*Meyrowitz
7 Chesley*

CHURCH HILL WOODS

*Urso
5 Smith Pk*

**SITE OF PROPOSED
PARKING MOUND
STRUCTURE**

old stone wall

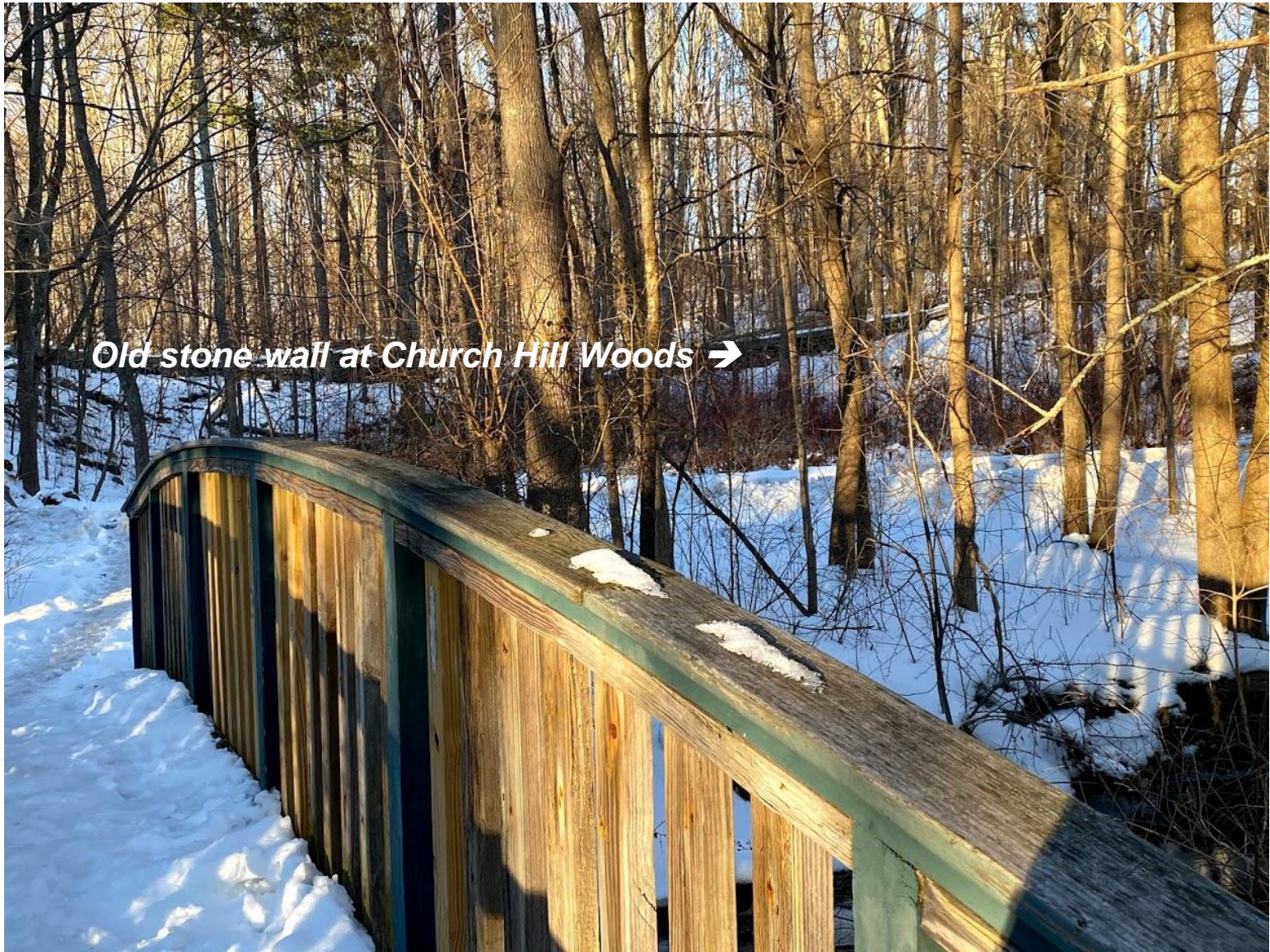
*Andersen
8 Chesley*



From abutting 5 Smith Park Lane home looking toward Mill Plaza



A football-field size mound of fill/asphalt & lampposts would replace steeply sloped woods.



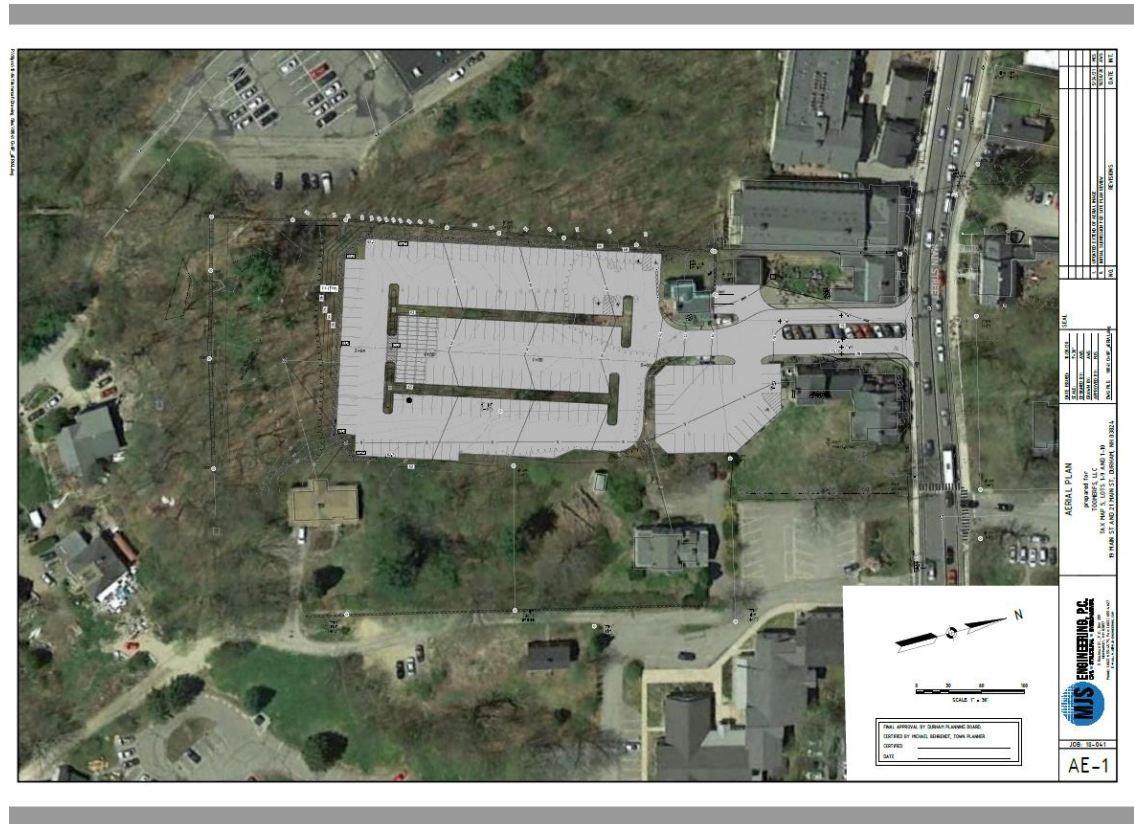
Old stone wall at Church Hill Woods →

College Brook Footbridge on the Faculty Neighborhood’s cherished “magic path” extending Thompson Lane through woods to the Chesley Marsh.

*Mike Sievert: “scale is respectful of what is out there because it’s **set back onto our property....**”*

What engineer Mike Sievert refers to as the “back” of the property is **FRONT** of property to **Faculty Neighborhood**, Durham’s largest family neighborhood (about 300 households).

As I critiqued at the May 12, 2021, Public Hearing, “flat-as-a-pancake” images (such as the one sent by Mike Sievert to the Planning Board on May 24, 2021, below) distort what the mass structure proposed would look like from abutting properties, from the Chesley Marsh, and from the College Brook bridge so popular with the entire neighborhood. The topography so cherished on Church Hill, as a HILL, is not yet displayed as it would be transformed by such a plan. That’s essential evaluative material.



**Please remember ALL the seasons at Church Hill Woods –
and that it has always been an impressively sloped HILL!**

