

April 8, 2021(b)

Planning Board
8 Newmarket Road
Durham, NH 03824

RE: 19-21 Main Street – Parking Lot. Formal application for site plan and conditional use for parking lot on four lots and reconfiguration of the entrance. Toomerfs, LLC c/o Pete Murphy and Tim Murphy, property owners. Mike Sievert, engineer. Robbi Woodburn, Landscape Architect. Map 5, Lots 1-9, 1-10, 1-15, and 1-16. Church Hill District.

Topic of this letter: Retaining wall and new trees

Dear Members of the Board,

The digital rendering of the high retaining wall holding up the proposed parking lot expansion recently provided by Toomerfs leaves me incredulous.

I am reminded of current and former Town Councilor, as well as resident, comments to the effect that it is difficult to envision what we will get and that we sometimes get what doesn't seem to match up with what was presented to us.

It is incumbent on the Planning Board to take every possible step to close this gap.

So I urge you to require that the applicant provide profile drawings and simulated views before you continue the public hearing.

First: In the year 2021, we surely have the technological capabilities to provide to-scale, accurate comparisons between existing constructed retaining walls, such as those at the Lodges at West Edge (the Peak student housing project on Mast Road) and at the Durham campus of RiverWoods on Stone Quarry Drive.

Second: Any trees planted at the base of the wall will take YEARS to attain meaningful screening—particularly if they are not provided appropriate maintenance. Please augment our site plan regulations in the Conditions of Approval, given that this is a conditional use application for an unusual—to say the least—addition to the edge of a residential neighborhood. In addition, this is a NATURAL area. Why introduce a row of trees that are atypical of the existing woodland—and the buffer that the developer intends to retain?

Third: The retaining wall, of manmade materials in regular shapes, dramatically contrasts with, and disrespects the historic rock wall(s) and other structures on the site. What a shame.

Finally: This is a unique construction abutting a residential neighborhood and a pedestrian path that is used in all weather by neighborhood residents, UNH and Durham business employees out for lunchtime strolls, and residents from across town getting their exercise.

Is this really the face we want to show?

Regards,

Robin