

**From:** [Lexe Turcotte](#)  
**To:** [Michael Behrendt](#); [gerrish@googlegroups.com](mailto:gerrish@googlegroups.com); [Karen Edwards](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Sending in Advance of 11/23 Conservation Commission Meeting - Re: Gerrish-Ambler Proposed Subdivision  
**Date:** Friday, February 12, 2021 10:04:18 AM

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Hello,

I was informed that I had poor audio connection and it was difficult to hear my comments when I spoke during Wednesday's Planning Board meeting. If you could please forward the note below to the Planning Board, I would appreciate it.

Note: I've added additional comments *in italics*.

Thank you for your help!  
Alexandria

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A similar sentiment was shared at a recent Conservation Commission meeting. However, I felt it important to share with this audience as well.

I'm speaking on behalf of myself, Alexandria, as well as my partner, Zachary. We would like to foremost thank every member of Planning Board for the long hours they've spent on this application already and the long hours they have ahead. We appreciate their attention to all concerns of this proposal. We bought our house on Gerrish Drive in late-September 2019. We were immediately attracted to the quiet neighborhood. *Durham has what we love: a small town community that offers a safe place to raise the family we hope to have someday, and a respect for the outdoors.* As people who love the outdoors, I am honestly not sure there is a trail in Durham that we haven't explored. We greatly appreciate the extent that Durham has protected our local environments. As a UNH graduate for my bachelors degree and masters degree - and now as a Durham resident - I've long understood Durham as a community that stands to protect its land and its citizens best interest.

As a Gerrish Drive resident, I walk, run, or ride our loop nearly every day, year round, in daylight and in darkness using a headlamp and reflective gear. Every time, the corner where Gerrish Drive meets Ambler Way causes me to run a little closer to the shoulder of the road: this corner is sharp, and lacks visibility. During the summertime, the thick cover of the wetlands - necessary to the environment - shield visibility of pedestrians from cars in both directions. In the wintertime, the corner continues to lack visibility due to snow piles and earlier sunsets. To build an access road on this corner puts pedestrian life at jeopardy: when the snow falls, an added intersection that will pile more snowbanks and further limit views for cars and pedestrians.

I recognize that I am one pedestrian and only one pedestrian, but I am not *the only* pedestrian. Two weeks ago I completed a "do it yourself" marathon running laps from our house. A friend came out for company for a few laps. It was only in the second lap

that he asked the question, "are there always this many people out walking the roads?" The answer was an easy yes. There are countless people who walk, run, cycle, and otherwise enjoy our quiet roads just like me and Zack.

A popular social media application for runners and cyclists, Strava, allows users to create "segments;" Strava segments are portions of road or trail created by members where athletes can compare and compete for the fastest times. There are several segments in the area around Canney Road, another in the Bucks Hill neighborhood, but as related to the proposed subdivision, and to further the point of risking pedestrian life, a cycling segment that loops Gerrish and Ambler causes the most concern. Cyclists using this application have recorded GPS times as fast as 27.3 MPH. A fast cyclist around a sharp corner is dangerous enough. Add in a lengthy construction project - or even afterwards, another intersection, and the lives and lifestyles of our neighbors are at risk.

*In Thursday's Conservation Commission meeting on February 11th, we learned that the best time to destroy the wetlands to build the proposed road is when the wetlands are most dry - during the summer months, likely starting in July. It goes without saying that summertime is the high-time for walkers, runners, and cyclists. Children are enjoying their summer vacation, people try to catch a breeze through open windows... All of that will be destructed and disrupted for the entire duration of building this road, while machinery and trucks come and go countless times throughout each day, and for the benefit of a for-profit subdivision. Approving this subdivision will not align with the strong history Durham has in advocating to protect its environments and promote its small-town feel.*

Even without that major concern, this proposal utterly destroys town-owned wetlands, which cannot be disputed. The wetlands and surrounding woods are home to not just the Gerrish-Ambler residents and pedestrians, but also to animals. As a local runner, I've also witness countless wildlife around this corner. In 2020 alone, I've had to change my direction due to families of turkey or deer blocking the road. On the sidewalk earlier this year in 2021, I nearly stepped on deer skat at least three times, *likely more. At least two of these three times were in the town-owned wetlands. I attempted to point it out to nearby participants.* This is just obvious evidence that the wetlands are used. It's fun to play the joke, "why did the turkey cross the road?" but the fact of the matter is that approving this subdivision will force animals to relocate their habitats and will endanger pedestrians. The process of restoring destroyed wetlands, as this project will do, is long and costly. Even when a wetland is restored, the function of that wetland can never truly be restored.

When this application is reviewed, the personal characterization of the applicants should not matter, *despite several "character witnesses" speaking tonight.* What should matter is the impacts to the environments and the residents well-being. I urge you all to reflect upon the conditions of use and how it will impact the citizens of this town and its local wildlife. We know that each of you were elected because you will act in our best interests. Again, we sincerely thank the Planning Board and hope you will consider these lenses when reviewing this application.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Alexandria Turcotte and Zachary Smart