

From: [Diana Carroll](#)
To: [Michael Behrendt](#); [Karen Edwards](#)
Subject: Letter to Michael Behrendt and PB Members
Date: Sunday, March 07, 2021 9:30:57 PM

To: Michael Behrendt and Members of the Planning Board

FROM: Diana Carroll

RE: Gerrish Development

My neighborhood is dealing with the proposed Gerrish development, and we have been disappointed by the lack of willingness on the part of the Planning Board to consider our proposal, which seeks to prevent wetland destruction.

Neighbors protesting wetland destruction, destruction that would result from the currently planned access route into a proposed housing development, have suggested an alternate route. This alternate route was considered acceptable until the owner of the proposed development land said it could not be legally used. Subsequently, the Durham town lawyer has responded that the alternate access is indeed legal.

The alternate route does not destroy any wetlands but parts of it are within the Wetlands Conservation Overlay District (WCOD). The road would encroach on a buffer.

As the date of the proposed development site walk approached, the neighbors asked Planning Board members to include the alternative access route in their site walk. The Town Planner said it was not necessary and the Planning Board Chair said the group would not be walking the alternative access route. During the second site walk, Planning Board members who were at the terminus of the alternate access route and were met there by a few neighbors, the Chair, and a member of the Conservation Commission encouraged the Planning Board members to see this alternate access route for themselves. They refused to walk it. This addition to the site walk would have taken merely ten minutes (twenty minutes round trip), and the terrain was not difficult. For an expenditure of about twenty minutes, Planning Board members would have gained the respect of the neighbors, who would have seen them as open-minded, cooperative, and willing to work together. Common ground would

have been established to discuss this alternate route.

During my years as a town committee chair and the decade I spent serving on the Council, I witnessed Durham town department heads, staff, and our town administrator going the extra mile with residents who sought information, had objections, or just wanted to vent. I was amazed at the patience, understanding and willingness of town staff and leaders to listen and engage residents. I have not witnessed the same leadership as my neighborhood attempts to work with the town on matters related to the Gerrish development access.

Since the site walks, the Planning Board has not changed its position on the alternate access, and so the neighbors have come together to give more thought to the best way of protecting the Gerrish wetland. The neighbors believe that a civil engineer should sketch a possible road through the alternate Bagdad Road access. The wetlands and buffers should be clearly delineated. And the decision of which access point to use, Bagdad or Gerrish, should be based on science. Which access is less disruptive to wetlands and buffers? Which access is better ecologically? The neighbors have brought these points and questions to the Planning Board, but there appears to be no interest on the part of the Planning Board to consider these questions and concerns.

By refusing to evaluate the Bagdad ROW alternate access on the basis of science rather than expediency, the board is putting itself in the dangerous position of not exercising due diligence required of it by the Durham Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations. Importantly, the neighborhood wants to work with you cooperatively.

Sincerely,
Diana Carroll