

Zoning Board of Appeals
101 Main Street
Ashland, MA 01721

September 18, 2017

Dear Chair Trefethen

I attended the September 12 Zoning Board of Appeals meeting and would like to express several comments and concerns regarding the 10 Waushakum Street public hearing.

I have included a spreadsheet of total finished square foot area for the residences on Rodman, Waushakum, Washington and Lakeside. Based on my tour, this neighborhood is a collection of different styles, shapes and sizes ranging from 480 square feet to 3436 square feet, with average size of 1453 square feet. It would appear that an 1800-1900 square feet home would not seem unreasonable, inappropriate or detrimental to the neighborhood's character. Based on the current status of 10 Waushakum, a new home should be a welcome addition. This is hardly a request to construct a McMansion. The issue for the Board is to determine whether the proposed home is excessive for the lot. I found that a convincing case was not made against the proposed building size. If the ZBA determines that the proposed size is excessive, I trust that the Board will find the proper balance that allows this property owner to improve both his property and the neighborhood.

I was particularly distressed to hear comments regarding the impact of this proposed home on traffic, schools and town resources. I find these types of arguments offensive and appear to support a bias against a proposal beyond the merits of the Special Permit request. I hope that was not the intent.

Regarding comments about bylaw enforcement in general, this neighborhood has several glaring issues that are not being addressed. During my tour of the neighborhood, I viewed what appears to be abandoned vehicles as well as a structure that looks as if it should be condemned. If issues of bylaw enforcement are raised in one area, we should be willing to enforce bylaw infractions in other areas.

If my math is correct, I counted (3) neighborhood households speaking to this issue, (2) in opposition and (1) in support. I would suggest that the Board attempt to gather a more balanced neighborhood representation, particularly in light of the submitted petition.

The Board also heard commentary from (2) residents who, in my opinion, offered misinformation and fabrication as the substance of their opposition. Like myself, they are not residents of this neighborhood but they seem to know what is best for everyone else.

Although I do not reside in this neighborhood, but just as I would in my own neighborhood, I am sensitive to any expressed concerns. Over the 25+ years that I have lived at

my current address, many of my neighbors have enlarged their homes and made betterments in a variety of ways. My home is on the smaller size range relative to the other homes but I have always felt that any improvements in my neighborhood helps to improve the value of my property. Is there a potential project that I would consider excessive and inappropriate for my neighborhood? I am sure there is but that has not been my experience.

The more I reflect on the 10 Waushakum Street hearing, the more my support lies with the property owner. I am confident that the ZBA will make a determination that allows a young couple the opportunity to raise a family in both a great neighborhood and a great community.

Thank you for your consideration,

Steven Mitchell
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