

Riley, Kate

From: Peterson, Lisa
Sent: Friday, December 6, 2019 3:05 PM
To: Riley, Kate; Roy, Brendon; Black, Michael
Subject: Fwd: Tobin/VLUS project - neighborhood concerns

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From: Joy Hackel <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, December 6, 2019 2:36:01 PM
To: City Manager <CityManager@CambridgeMA.GOV>; City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>; Crane, Paula <pcrane@cambridgema.gov>; SchoolCom@cpsd.us <SchoolCom@cpsd.us>; ksalim@cpsd.us <ksalim@cpsd.us>; dbeard@cpsd.us <dbeard@cpsd.us>; [REDACTED]; Peterson, Lisa <lisap@cambridgema.gov>
Subject: Tobin/VLUS project - neighborhood concerns

Dear Mr. DePasquale and colleagues,

Our family has lived on Alpine Street for more than 20 years. Our home here is the first and only house we've ever owned. Both our sons graduated from Cambridge Rindge and Latin. We love our public school system and our neighborhood. We want what's best for all the kids in Cambridge.

That said, our family is very worried about what we've seen unfold so far with the proposed new Tobin/VLUS. From our perspective, the process has been rushed, differing points of view in the community aren't being listened to and the neighborhood hasn't been included in the process. We're very concerned that the end result will jam too many programs for our community's kids into too small a place. Based on the process so far, we don't think the way we're headed will work out best for any of the stakeholders.

I'll offer a few examples in terms of the process so far. They may seem small, but they've sent the signal that our input isn't valued and respected.

- The two community meetings (not three as some have suggested have happened) have gone out of their way to minimize group discussion. Officials offer presentations and then neighbors are sent to various small classrooms so that group concerns can't be discussed together. One neighbor present at the November meeting described the breakout rooms as a "divide and conquer" strategy. Perhaps it wasn't intentional, but we felt shut out.

- No copies of the three new building proposals were available for those in attendance at community meetings. When I asked for paper copies, someone on the architectural staff said, "I was going to make them, but I forgot." The proposal involves a quarter of a billion dollars in tax payer money. Someone could have made and distributed copies of the plans for the people who live here, especially for elderly neighbors who don't go online.

- Neighbors tried to get copies of the proposals in the days leading up to the Nov. 13th meeting. We were told they were "still being worked on." But when we arrived at the community meeting, 3-D scale models had been prepared. How could those have been made if the plans weren't finalized until just before the meeting? Why not distribute the proposals freely - door-to-door - so everyone knows what is planned for their neighborhood for the next few years?

- In the weeks leading up to the November meeting, the decision was announced to permanently move community playing fields from Tobin to Glacken. The move was made with zero community input. Those playing fields, and the ballgames that take place there, were the heart and soul of the Tobin neighborhood in the spring and summer. And with no advance warning, they're gone.

These may seem like small matters, but for many of us they represent the difference between a neighborhood where people care a lot about one another, and a top-down, your-voice-doesn't-count-much approach.

So here on Alpine Street, we're all looking forward to an actual dialogue about the key issues. We'd like to request another community meeting, as well as a gathering with all Tobin abutters, city staff and architects.

This is going to be a lengthy process. We're all in it for the long haul. Our goal - and yours too I'm sure - is what's best for the kids and the community.

Here's hoping we can all work together.

Thank you.

Joy Hackel & family

