

**From:** tggmusic@rcn.com [mailto:tggmusic@rcn.com]

**Sent:** Sunday, August 28, 2016 9:15 AM

**To:** Maria Morelli; Neil Wishinsky; Julie Washburn; Jennifer Buller; Melvin Kleckner; Polly Selkoe; Kerry Fleming; Alison Steinfeld

**Cc:** RhondaGlyman@hsl.harvard.edu

**Subject:** Re: Further Comment 420 Harvard Street

Dear Ms. Morelli-

I notice my comments are not yet posted on the web site. I would appreciate your posting on Monday and making sure the independent site consultant has them.

As I walk Fuller and Coolidge Streets and watch traffic back-ups and pedestrians on Fuller, I do not see any logic to a conclusion that an entrance on Fuller at the congested Harvard and Fuller intersection makes more sense for traffic, parking or most importantly safety than an entrance on Coolidge. Any such decision would seem arbitrary and without basis, except to respond to the vocal residents of Coolidge Street which also seems to match the financial interests of the Developer because an entrance on Fuller is apparently less expensive to construct.

If a Fuller Street entrance is approved, I ask the ZBA to clearly and completely document on the record its rationale for determining that Fuller is a proper entrance when Coolidge was first proposed by the Developer as an alternative. It is important that the record is clear in case a legal challenge to a ZBA determination becomes necessary.

I also question the addition of 49 Coolidge Street to the 420 Harvard LLC application. Affiliated companies cannot bind one another even if under common ownership. I wonder if the application should be resubmitted and the clock and hearings started anew with a proper applicant and a complete description of the project.

Thank you,

Tom Gunning  
39 Fuller Street  
Brookline, MA 02446

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**From:** [tggmusic@rcn.com](mailto:tggmusic@rcn.com)

**To:** [mmorelli@brooklinema.gov](mailto:mmorelli@brooklinema.gov), [nwishinsky@brooklinema.gov](mailto:nwishinsky@brooklinema.gov),  
[jwashburn@brooklinema.gov](mailto:jwashburn@brooklinema.gov), "Jennifer Buller" <[Jennifer\\_Buller@psbma.org](mailto:Jennifer_Buller@psbma.org)>,  
[mkleckner@brooklinema.gov](mailto:mkleckner@brooklinema.gov), [pselkoe@brooklinema.gov](mailto:pselkoe@brooklinema.gov), [kfleming@brooklinema.gov](mailto:kfleming@brooklinema.gov),  
[asteinfeld@brooklinema.gov](mailto:asteinfeld@brooklinema.gov)

**Cc:** [RhondaGlyman](mailto:RhondaGlyman)

**Sent:** Tuesday, August 23, 2016 9:08:24 AM

**Subject:** Further Comment 420 Harvard Street

Dear Town Officials-

I attended the August 10, 2016 ZBA hearing on the proposed 420 Harvard Project. At the hearing, many different views were expressed. But there was one strong, common, simple theme - the project is far too big and jeopardizes the JFK Crossing Community. The community repeatedly asked the Developer to bring the building to scale for public safety voluntarily - and

due to traffic, parking and aesthetic considerations. The residents were very clear - scale is three stories - not six stories. Many showed up to speak against the project. Not a single person spoke in favor as I recall.

This large, six story project - totally out of character for this historic neighborhood - delivers little for low income residents of Brookline. I understand that just 8 of 36 Units will be "affordable". Based on my understanding of the application, affordable seems to mean rent of \$1,418 per month for a two bedroom apartment or \$17,772 per year. I believe the federal poverty guideline for a family of four is \$24,000. So it seems rent would be a whopping 73% of income at the federal poverty level. This leads me to conclude that the project does nothing to provide low-income residents with housing. The project just lowers rents somewhat for a few units in what seems to be a high-end or even luxury building.

On the other hand, for little to no benefit, the project would destroy a historic neighborhood (John F. Kennedy Crossing) and negatively impact neighboring residents as the ZBA heard in passionate testimony.

At the hearing there was a lot of discussion about whether the entrance should be on Coolidge or Fuller Street. This issue is secondary to the over-sized building, but important. I was very surprised to see the ZBA seemingly influenced that Fuller might be best based on testimony from residents of Coolidge. The ZBA seemed to credit the Developer for listening - when in fact I gather that an entrance on Fuller would be less costly and is therefore in the Developer's economic interest plus gives something to very vocal opponents perhaps easing the path to approval. It is important that Town Officials now carefully consider the entrance options. To me, it seems an entrance on Coolidge would create far fewer safety and traffic problems. To compare we need to look at the two streets. Coolidge is a relatively quiet street with little traffic and no parking lots. The proposal is to have an entrance next to the Butcherie at Coolidge and Harvard. While this will create some additional traffic, it will not compound any other problems. On the other hand, an entrance on Fuller would compound and create problems. I note that Center Street ends at Fuller. Many many cars turn right from Center on to Fuller. They then stop at the light at the intersection of Harvard. That light is posted no right hand turn. So cars naturally back-up. It takes just four cars to block the Center Street parking lot entrance. Five cars to block my driveway. I have previously submitted a photo showing that these back-ups happen now in ordinary traffic. Now consider the addition of an entrance to the new 36 residential unit complex plus retail parking on Fuller Street. The entrance and exit will be across from the Center Street parking lot entrance/exit. So when cars back-up at the Fuller/Harvard light after coming off Center Street, the cars trying to exit the new project on to Fuller will be simply stuck. When they edge out as people do, they will block traffic coming off Harvard on to Fuller. The traffic will back-up on to Harvard. Plus the back-up on Fuller in front of the Center Street parking lot will be lengthened. Now add the challenge of a car coming off of Harvard to turn left into the Center Street Parking lot with cars backed up at the light and blocking the entrance. Gridlock in both directions. At the last hearing, you had testimony from a civil engineer on this very point. From a safety point of view, you must consider pedestrian traffic on Fuller too. Specifically consider the many elders coming down Fuller from the SeniorLife Center at the corner of Center and Fuller to shop in JFK Crossing - often with walkers. They will have to navigate backed-up parking lots blocking the sidewalks on

both sides of the street. Devotion students will have the same challenge. I was quite disturbed by the conversation during the hearing about putting in pedestrian warning systems on the side of the street with the project - this is simply an acknowledgment by the ZBA and an admission of the Developer that a safety hazard will be created by an entrance on Fuller. None of this would occur if the entrance was on Coolidge. An entrance on Harvard - a more commercial street - would suit everyone - but has not been discussed.

I am also concerned about the Developer's possible side conversations with some property owners. While the Developer may quiet some objections - it is up to the Town to determine what is best for all. You should not simply do what causes the least amount of objections from folks with time and ability to attend ZBA hearings. In particular, I believe the interests of the residents at the SeniorLife Center who go up and down Fuller all day long should be very carefully considered. The interests of the residents of Fuller Street should also be considered even if we have been less vocal than the Coolidge Street residents. (I agree with my neighbors on Coolidge that the project is just too big.) Plus of course the visitors to the JFK Crossing area who must access the Center Street parking lot should be considered.

Also look at the proposed stretch with parking at the project which I believe was characterized by the Developer as "managed parking". The ZBA asked great questions so we could understand that the Developer is actually proposing tandem parking with a contract with Remax to have people in the office come down to the parking lot to move cars as needed. This sounds bizarre to me as a way to meet legal parking requirements. So what happens if Remax closes its doors or an agent is just on the phone? What is the Town's remedy if the contract between the Developer and Remax is not followed? This stretch proposal should be rejected. The parking proposal, if accepted, would likely exacerbate the traffic issues I noted above as cars back-up in an over-loaded Fuller Street waiting to get into the new parking lot.

It is important that Town Officials now carefully consider the views of the community. All Town officials should be involved now - the Planning Board, Town Council, Town Legal Counsel and most certainly those concerned with the safety of children going to the Devotion School and our elderly neighbors living at the SeniorLife Center on the corner of Center and Fuller.

My asks are :

1. The ZBA and other concerned Town Officials should do a second site visit before the next hearing on August 30. Look again at traffic and parking on Fuller and Coolidge Street. See the traffic coming off Center on to Fuller and the back-ups at Fuller and Harvard. Notice the no right on red sign at the intersection. Notice how few cars it takes to "stack up" at the light before blocking the Center Street parking lot and my driveway. Imagine what will naturally happen when cars are trying to enter and exit the new project and also enter and exit the Center Street Parking lot with the normal back-ups at the light. Imagine traffic coming off Harvard and seeking to turn left into the Center Street parking lot. Walk just one block up to the SeniorLife Center. Perhaps talk to the Executive Director and residents about how they walk into town to

shop. Walk over to Coolidge Street to see that an entrance on Coolidge presents none of the same issues.

2. No matter how you come out on the entrance, please do not grant this Developer one variance, one waiver or any other accommodation of any kind that is not clearly required by law unless and until the Developer brings the project to scale - a three story building. The ZBA said they would discuss size, scale and massing with the Developer at the end of August 10 hearing - please start doing so at the August 30 hearing. This is the primary issue. Please use every tool at your disposal to both allow the project to proceed as required by law and in accordance with the intent of facilitating affordable housing and to protect the historic JFK Crossing community. Please give the residents assurance that we can count on you to do good planning for our community, including watching out for our seniors who may not be able to attend the hearings. If the Developer wants to deal with us based on his maximum position under the law, please respond in kind and give the Developer absolutely nothing that the law does not clearly require. Not one concession. Please keep in mind the rhetorical question of one of my neighbors to the Developer along the lines of "you would not be building this project here if your children or aging mother lived in the community, would you?"

3. Please stop by and have a look at the mural entitled the "Epoch History of JFK Crossing" painted on the side of the Daily Catch. Sometimes affectionately referred to as the Gum Wall Mural. Appreciate the sense of community shown in mural. Remember this is a historic neighborhood and community - John F. Kennedy's childhood neighborhood - and entitled to be treated as such and with decency and respect.

Some senior town officials do not publish their email addresses. I copied others on their teams. If you received this email and believe it was intended for the head of your functional area, please forward.

Thank you,

Tom Gunning  
39 Fuller Street  
Brookline, MA 02446