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30 Longwood Ave., Unit 104
Brookline, MA 02446

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Chairman Neil Wishinsky
Brookline Board of Selectmen
333 Washington Dt.
Brookline, MA 02445

Dear Chairman Wiskinsky and Members of the Board:

I am writing to you because I just learned there is a 14-story building being proposed in the space that is currently occupied by 1299 Beacon St. and its corresponding parking lot that abuts Sewall Ave.

I have been a resident of 30 Longwood Ave. since 2000 – the year it was first occupied. 30 Longwood Ave. sits at the corner of Longwood Ave. and Sewall Ave. and the side of our building is directly across the street from the proposed new building. I live with my parents. The reason my parents purchased in this building was in order for me to live in a safe environment where I can be as independent as possible. You see, I am a person with a disability and use a power wheelchair. When I am able, I go around town with my Service Dog, Billy.

I love Brookline. I know when I go out people will not be staring at me. I am not the only person using a wheelchair, or a service dog, or with a disability. There are lots of people in my neighborhood who have disabilities. The diversity of my neighborhood and the feeling of being safe allow me to be happy where I live.

As I am sure you know, Sewall Ave. is already a street that is overburdened with vehicles. I can't tell you how many times I have been in the middle of the crosswalk and a car comes barreling down one-way Sewall Ave. going the wrong way, or people jockeying for a parking space start backing up almost hitting me. Because both private cars of postal workers and the mail trucks have insufficient space in the post office lot, they park, and double park along Sewall Ave.

Then there are the parents who are dropping off or picking up their children from programs that are held at Temple Sinai. They already double park, very often blocking the driveway into our building.

All of this congestion results in delivery trucks parking along the sidewalks on both sides of Sewall Ave. Where that is merely unsightly or inconvenient for most pedestrians who are forced to walk on the grass to get around them, for me it is extremely dangerous. It forces me either out into the street or having to go down a block only to cross the street in the opposite direction of where I wanted to go.

The thought of doubling the amount of traffic on Sewall Ave. by a building that will have 108 apartments, retail space, and 178 parking spaces, truly frightens me. As people are coming home from work in the dusk or dark and are tired and anxious to get into their garage, will they see me in my wheelchair if I am in the crosswalk as they are turning onto Sewall Ave.? What about the delivery trucks? When we first moved here the post office used 18-wheelers to deliver the mail to their facility. They used to turn onto the lawn of 51 Sewall. When 51 Sewall was developed and a wall was put up around the property, the 18-wheelers no longer had enough space to back into the post office loading dock, so for a while they started turning into our driveway which was not constructed to hold that kind of weight; and because Sewall Ave. was never designed to handle that size truck, they would often leave their truck parked in the middle of our drive and run over to the post office to have someone move the vehicles in their lot so they could back up. This means we were trapped in our garage. How is it going to work to have moving vans and additional delivery trucks trying to back up on a street and into a loading dock that has already been proven to be impossible?

I can't tell you how many times, because either mail trucks or lines of double parked cars were blocking our driveway, I've been late for doctor appointments. In addition, I often use The Ride, and the drivers have a very difficult time finding a safe place around my building to pick me up.

I can't imagine how this size building that depends so much on access via Sewall Ave. can possibly work. All the difficulty I have encountered over the years will be so very much worse. Not just for my own safety and quality of life, but for the safety and quality of life of all the other pedestrians who regularly use my neighborhood, both folks with and without disabilities, I beg you to please deny this building.

Sincerely,

Stacy Berloff

Cc: Allison Steinfeld
Stephanie Orsini