

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

**Sent:** Tuesday, November 22, 2016 6:19 AM

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

**Cc:** Jenna Fisher, BrooklineTAB

**Subject:** omments from Senior LifeCenter on 420 Harvard

Dear Town Officials-

I attach my opinion piece published in the Brookline Tab entitled "Will Brookline Seniors Lose (too) at JFK Crossing?"

The piece called for the Town to get the views of the more than 350 seniors who live in the Danish Family Residences and the Cohen Residences at the Hebrew Senior LifeCenter located at the corner of Center and Fuller Streets just one block from the 420 Harvard project. ( I note the Cohen Residences is a Section 8 affordable housing campus with over 100 apartments exclusively for seniors.) This group of over 350 Brookline residents is clearly the largest group of residents who will be impact by the proposed development. I sent the piece to Maria Morelli on November 2. It seems no one from the Town has reached out to get the views of the seniors.

I gave a heads-up to the Executive Director of the Hebrew Senior LifeCenter when the piece was published. She invited my neighbor and I to visit the SeniorLife Center and also talk with the residents. We met with about 25 residents yesterday afternoon at the SeniorLife Center.

We explained the project. Most of them had heard nothing about it. It is not convenient for many of the residents to travel to Town Hall to attend the ZBA meetings from 7-9pm in the evening. We shared my opinion piece and some photos that I have previously provided to you.

We asked the following 5 questions and wanted to report the answers.

1. Do you walk down Fuller to reach Harvard Street?

Answer: Yes, everyone who attended the meeting regularly walks Fuller Street to get to Harvard Street. Some attendees walk unaided, some use canes, some use walkers and one uses a motorized scooter.

2. Are there any current safety issues from your perspective?

Yes, the sidewalks are in bad shape. One senior had tripped and suffered a bloody nose and scratched glasses. Others explained the condition of the sidewalks makes navigation challenging. Some noted that there is no crosswalk that crosses Fuller at the intersection of Center Street and Fuller Street. All agreed that the sidewalk at the Fuller Street parking lot is often blocked by cars unable to exit as I have shown you in pictures. Some noted they cross Fuller Street (without the benefit of a crosswalk) before they get to the Fuller Street parking lot because of the safety issue of a blocked sidewalk and entering and exiting traffic at a busy parking lot.

3. Do you think the new development will cause any safety issues?

The answer was a universal yes. The seniors could see that both sidewalks would now be blocked. On the side of the proposed new development, we explained that the seniors would need to navigate an entrance lane, an exit lane and a truck loading zone. We explained there would be warning signs. The seniors noted that folks using walkers look down at the sidewalk to avoid rough spots which could cause them to trip. The warning signs do not fully help. They wondered about how construction would be handled. They noted truck traffic would cut both sidewalks. They saw new safety risks from the development. We reported that the ZBA discussed doing a pedestrian study - and decided against it. The seniors were surprised given how heavily Fuller Street is traveled by them and many others.

4. What can the Town or developer do to reduce any safety issues?

Answer : The sense of the meeting was clearly that the Zoning Board of Appeals should not approve the project due to safety issues if the entrance, exit and loading zone will be on Fuller Street as currently proposed.

If the Zoning Board of Appeals proceeds anyway with a Fuller entrance, exit and loading zone, the seniors proposed making Fuller Street a one-way street, adding a crosswalk crossing Fuller at the corner of Center and Fuller, repairing the sidewalks on both sides of the street and taking other steps possible during construction and after completion to recognize that more 350 seniors walk Fuller Street to Harvard on a regular basis - some without aid, some with canes, some with walkers and some with motorized scooters.

5. Has anyone asked you for your input on the project?

Answer: No - no one asked. No one from the Town, the Developer or the neighborhood group lead by residents of Coolidge Street. The seniors were not pleased that they were not consulted on a project that impacts them so directly. One asked if they were second class citizens.

6. Does it matter to you whether the entrance, exit and loading zone is on Fuller Street or Coolidge Street?

Answer: Yes, the residents felt the entrance, exit and loading zone should not be on Fuller. They did not feel both sidewalks on Fuller Street should be cut by traffic and blocked by waiting cars if any other option was available. They did not agree that warning signs would be adequate to protect them.

The residents want to have a voice in the process. We informed the seniors that the agenda for tonight's meeting did not include public comment - and that the ZBA seemed close to approval. They are considering a petition to the Zoning Board of Appeals which they may submit in the coming days.

I suggest that the ZBA consider if you have fairly and throughly considered the safety issues of the proposed project that more than 350 seniors will face daily vs. appeasing the small group of well-organized, vocal residents of Coolidge Street who clearly have the Planning Department's ear.

Perhaps there is more work to do to truly and fairly consider the interests of the entire community.

Sincerely,

Tom Gunning