To: Maria Morelli

From: Linda Olson Pehlke, TMM Pct. 2

Re: Babcock Place 40B

Date: June 13, 2017

I am writing to offer further comments on the proposed 40B housing development at 134-138 Babcock. Please forward to the Brookline Zoning Board of Appeals on my behalf.

I am focusing my comments on two principle concerns, namely the massing and vehicle access and circulation.

The scale and massing of the proposed development is far in excess of the average height and density within the surrounding neighborhood. The 40B regulations, 760 CMR 56.04(4)(c) states "that the conceptual project design is generally appropriate for the site on which it is located, taking into consideration factors that may include proposed use, conceptual site plan and building massing, topography, environmental resources, and integration into existing development patterns." This is not the case for this development proposal, and I will illustrate this finding through a process of determining the FAR of surrounding properties and comparing those results to the Babcock Place proposal.

Pg. 18 of the Babcock Place application states that "The proposed 62-unit apartment building will be similar in bulk and mass with adjacent multi-family buildings". This is not true.

Pg. 19 of the Babcock Place application states that the proposal is for a project with 126.5 units per buildable acre. It also states that the lot area is 21,486 sf and the building footprint is 19,500 sf. Since there are four floors of units above the first floor parking, the total building square footage is roughly 78,000 sf. Therefore, the FAR of this project is about 3.6. This is actually a conservative estimate when one notes that the upper floors are in fact cantilevered over the first floor. Brookline determines FAR based on the gross floor area of a building.

So, how do these measures of density, the 126.5 units per acre and 3.6 FAR compare with the surrounding multi-family properties?

Address	Lot Area	Building Sq.ft.	FAR	Units/acre
120 Babcock (adjacent to 134 Babcock)	32,755	60,798	1.86	87.8
143 Babcock (across street from 134)	5,438	6,021	1.12	43.4
Babcock Place Proposal	19,500	78,000	3.6	138.5*

* The calculation of 138.5 units per acre for the Babcock proposal was done using the same methodology as was used for the adjacent properties for purposes of comparison. The applicant apparently used an unknown value for "buildable acre" in their calculation.

All data for adjacent properties was obtained via the Town of Brookline on-line assessor's database. Both 120 and 143 Babcock are multi-family buildings adjacent to the proposed project. Other properties in the vicinity are two-family and single-family with FAR's ranging from .27 to .71. Clearly, the proposed Babcock Place project is vastly out-of-scale with the surrounding properties. If the 134-138 parcels were developed to the same density as the largest multi-family project nearby, it would have 43 units or a total of 40,848 sq. ft. of building area, rather than 62 units and 78,000 sq. ft. In terms of square footage of building area, this would be about half as large as the proposed building square footage. A building of approximately half the scale would still be a large and dense development, given the current buildings' .44 FAR, but at least it would not be so extravagantly over-scaled as the proposed building.

If we accept the premise that in order to "fit" into the context of the Babcock St. neighborhood, the build-out square footage must be reduced by about half, the resulting site plan could include both a shorter building (3 stories would be appropriate) and larger set-backs. The lack of adequate set backs in the current design results in many of the most egregious impacts from the development. Maintaining a suitable front yard and human-scaled façade would maintain the pleasing streetscape currently enjoyed by a large number of pedestrians. Larger side and rear yard set-backs will help mitigate the extremely negative impacts on neighboring residences.

Another troubling feature of the proposed Babcock Place development is the fact that the proposal is contemplating two active driveways, one accessing two garage doors, which make up a large portion of the front façade of the building, and on the site visit, it was mentioned that the proponent was contemplating utilizing an existing driveway at the northern edge of the property for deliveries and services. From a pedestrian and bicyclist perspective, it would be highly desirable to consolidate the two driveways, limiting the number of driveways to one. A driveway located on the northern edge of the property may help retain some of the heritage trees on the site and would allow the front façade of the building to be focused on a pleasing, human scaled front entrance. The traffic analysis suggests that an additional 500 vehicle trips to and from the proposed building will be generated. This is a great deal of additional potential conflicts between vehicles exiting and entering and the large volume of pedestrians and bicyclists using this roadway.

In conclusion, the proposed project is vastly over-scaled as the above comparison of FAR and units per acre illustrate. Shrinking the bulk of the proposal by about one-half would allow a project design that is closer to surrounding densities, has adequate set-backs and provides greater safety and a more welcoming façade and entrance for all travelers in the area.