

January 26, 2019

Zoning Board of Appeals, Town of Brookline

Re: Proposed Ch.40B development at 1299 Beacon Street

Dear Mr. Geller and Honorable Members of Zoning Board,

I am a trustee of the 64 Sewall Avenue Condo Association which includes eight units.

I want to **unequivocally support** the letter from Ramesh and Lisa Shivdasa dated January 26, 2019. Their specific references to the documents and process should be taken seriously. In addition, please note that a memo to Maria Morelli from Todd Kirrane on November 27, 2018 refers to incorrect statements about traffic on this portion of Sewall Avenue:

“Contrary to the statements in the TIA, the intersections in the area pose a safety concern for both pedestrians and cyclists in the current conditions and any additional, unmitigated, motor vehicle trips will only add to this problem.”

I would like to provide you with observations from my window from which I can see Sewall Avenue from Charles Street to the Trader Joe’s parking lot.

This portion of Sewall Avenue is dissimilar from the eastern portion of Sewall Avenue. It includes multiple uses for multiple age groups, is the entrance and egress for the US Postal Service parking lot from which all mail in Brookline is distributed Monday through Saturday, and is a short cut from Harvard St going north to Beacon Street going east. The light at Charles and Beacon is short and each cycle allows four cars to pass through.

The traffic report includes data from a traffic study done during the rush hours and mid-day during the week and one day on the weekend; time duration of the reports is the same on all days.

The street is extremely busy and activity occurs **throughout the day, not just at peak or even mid-day**. Here are my observations.

1. Religious school pick up and drop off on 2-3 weekdays in the mid and late afternoons. This time period was not included in the traffic report. Cars park and double park 15 minutes before children are dismissed. When children are dismissed, they run to cars parked on both sides of Sewall and Charles Street.
2. Afterschool children’s programs and a summer program for children are held in the religious school. Starting and ending of these programs do not fall within the time periods covered in the traffic report.
3. Except for the summer, the street is congested Saturday mornings 9:30-12:30 for pick-up and drop-off of children for Bat and Bar Mitzvahs. Yellow school buses are often parked on Charles Street causing a narrow road (and sometimes blocking the road). Religious services, especially on the High Holy Days, further exacerbate the traffic. A policeman is hired to direct traffic on these days because of the congestion.
4. Post office vehicles often park and turn around for backing into post office facilities. This occurs in non-peak hours in the morning and afternoon.
5. Trash pick-up occurs throughout the morning, often narrowing the road and blocking cars even in non-rush hour traffic. Trash pickup from the proposed building will further exacerbate the problem.

6. Trader Joe's parking faces Sewall so traffic continues throughout the day. Cars often pile up on Longwood Avenue and the portion of Sewall Avenue studied in the traffic report. The store is the busiest on Friday evenings and all-day Saturday and Sunday.
7. When ambulances have been called for children in religious school, the ambulance and required fire truck block the street not allowing any traffic to pass. This building is slated for older people who unfortunately call ambulances more frequently. In addition, the plans do not designate an area for cars to park while seniors transfer in and out of the car.
8. Charles Street is a short-cut around Coolidge Corner. The traffic report did not include comments pertaining to back-ups stemming from the short Charles Street/Beacon Street traffic light. Traffic often backs up onto the portion of Sewall where the garage is planned. Snow banks further exacerbate this problem. (As I type this letter, nine cars are waiting for the light and three cars are backed up onto Sewall Avenue.)

I am concerned about the parking plans. If I understand this correctly, the mechanism for parking is a contraption that allows cars to be carried to and from lower floors. Does this mechanism exist anywhere else in Brookline or is this the first time one is being built? If cars will be waiting to be 'carried' up and down, will this back up traffic on this narrow portion of Sewall Avenue? More information is clearly needed especially if there will be designated areas for the public to park because of reduced number of street parking spaces.

I understand that development is needed in Coolidge Corner. I respectfully ask:

1. The number of units in the building be reduced by at least 25%.
2. The parking mechanism be fully studied before allowing it to further congest this busy street.

Sincerely yours,

Janet Schwartz
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