

February 25, 2019

Zoning Board of Appeals
Town of Brookline

Re: Development proposed at 1299 Beacon Street

Honorable Members of the Board:

Many thanks for your close attention to the points we and other abutters raised in our letters last month. As you continue to weigh the serious safety issues on Sewall Avenue, please see the following photos, taken on the morning of Saturday, February 16, from opposite sides of the Longwood-Sewall intersection.



The two postal trucks pulled up on the sidewalk (and a third pulled up behind them) were not staged; these are *everyday occurrences on Sewall Avenue*. In fact, February 16th was the first Saturday of school vacation week, with particularly low traffic. The January 22, 2019 photograph on the next page shows a common view from

our living room window, across from the property's rear parking lot. These images substantiate the community's concerns regarding public safety. They highlight that delivery trucks routinely bow to expediency, using Sewall Avenue sidewalks to park, or worse, to turn. It is inconceivable



for this street to support a large number of additional passenger and delivery vehicles without jeopardizing local safety.

At the January 30th hearing, we heard no allowable justification for the proposed increases in building height and the number of residential units. Instead, the architect offered indefensible esthetic arguments: "then by simply adding the nine feet, I think we were able to achieve a different portion to the building and that gave us the density and sort of the look that I think made more sense for what we

were trying to achieve from the step massing approach." Mr. Pandya continued, "so instead of just adding to the tallest part, we thought proportionally it was more important to keep that two story increase from the Beacon side to the [Sewall] side. ... So to us even though it was a slight increase in area, *it felt like a better proportion to make the building not feel as tall by adding the correct stepping from [Sewall] to Beacon.*" [Italics added] The disingenuousness and invalidity of these ridiculous claims speak for themselves.

Among the many valid questions you raised on January 30th, we concur that Mr. Meiklejohn's casual comment during a previous hearing about the building's earlier proposed height was not



intended as a license to build even higher, in violation of the PEL stipulations. And we very much appreciate your recognizing on record that the approx. 3' step-backs proposed above the 4th floor on the Sewall Avenue side fail to mitigate massing and other architectural concerns. We are unimpressed by architect Haril Pandya's vacuous, self-serving statements such as "how we can create more density, more excitement and energy and helping retail and other areas of parts of North Brookline" or his references to "the pulsing undulation of the

cityscape". These remarks ignore the core concern that the street cannot safely support the proposed intensity of use.

As other members of the public have stated, the neighborhood is united in favoring development at 1299 Beacon Street, asking only that the proposal respond to the legitimate and substantial safety concerns on Sewall Avenue. Over more than 2 years of public debate about this property, the developer's team has not reached out to abutters to achieve a reasonable consensus that ensures healthy profits and more affordable housing in Brookline, without risking public safety.

Sincerely,

Ramesh and Lisa Shivdasani
51 Sewall Avenue, Unit B