

Monique Baldwin

From: David Trevvett <detrevvett@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, June 14, 2020 11:19 PM
To: Monique Baldwin; Joseph Braga
Subject: For ZBA: Support Audible alarm for parking exit from 2Life facility at 370 Harvard Street

To: Jesse Geller, Chair, Zoning Board of Appeals
Other Board Members

I have become aware of June 10 requests sent to you by and on behalf of 2Life Communities regarding the 370 Harvard Street complex currently under construction. One of these requests is for a waiver to the requirement ("Condition 16(c)") for activation of an audible signal on the parking control equipment at the Williams Street driveway exit. The purpose of Condition 16(c) is "to alert pedestrians of exiting vehicles." 2Life Communities wishes to have visual warnings only. Their lawyers have asked that this request be considered at the Board's June 18 meeting if possible.

I object strongly to this request for a waiver, and urge the ZBA to reject it.

Audible alarms are necessary not only for the safety of visually impaired pedestrians for whom a visual-only alarm (flashing light or otherwise) is of no help, but also for sighted pedestrians who are not paying sufficient attention to their surroundings -- for example, those whose eyes might be glued to the screens on their smart phones as they walk down the street, or a parent momentarily distracted by a child. We have all witnessed this type of behaviour. An audible alarm, even a quiet one, can help break through this lapse in attention and prevent an accident.

The volume of the alarm is key. The requestors claim that an audible alarm will annoy both residents of 370 Harvard Street itself and residents of other buildings nearby. But the fact is that the alarm need not be so loud that it can be heard from 100, 50, or even 20 feet away. In general Williams Street is a quiet street. What's needed is an alarm volume that can be heard on a quiet street maybe 10 feet away. That will be enough to mitigate the risk.

My fear is that if the initial implementation is with no audible alarm at all, with the speaker not even connected, then there will never be an audible alarm until such time as there is a serious accident. And waiting for an accident to happen before implementing the measure that could prevent it is not a good way to set public policy. I would much rather start with a very-low-volume audible alarm, allow the neighborhood to become accustomed to it, then adjust the volume up or down over time as dictated by experience.

I urge the ZBA to reject the request.

Thank you,
David Trevvett, 177 Babcock Street, Unit 1
[Cell phone 772-636-0309]

[I am the current Chair of the Pedestrian Advisory Committee, but writing here as an individual, primarily as a Brookline Resident who passes by this site frequently on the way to the Senior Center, mainly for BrooklineCAN Steering Committee meetings and Senior Center events.]