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Sent: Tuesday, February 20, 2024 4:30 PM
To: Reilly, Meghan; Hibbard, Harry; White, Steve; Constable, Jennifer;
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gsullivan@town.hull.ma.us
Cc: West, Lori
Subject: Paragon Dunes Proposal --

2/18/2024

Town of Hull
253 Atlantic Ave
Hull, MA 02045

Planning Board Members

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Harry Claude Hibbard, Affordable Housing Committee Representative
Steve White, Vice Chair
Jeanne Paquin, Zoning Bylaw Committee Representative
Nathan Peyton, Community Preservation Committee Representative
Jim Pitrolo
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Town Manager Jen Constable

Chris Dilorio, Director of Community Development & Planning

Design Review Board Members

Tory Lam
Fulvia Quilici Matteuci
Julia Parker
Don Ritz
Georgette Sullivan

CC: The Hull Times

Re: Paragon Dunes development proposal

Dear Town of Hull Volunteer Committee members and Town Employees,

I write because I believe this proposal is not in the best interest of the Town of Hull. While the developer and their legal and architectural teams have responded somewhat to your concerns and citizens' concerns, the project is still way out of line to be developed in Hull's beautiful community – primarily benefiting the financial interests of the developer. Of course, the developer is within their rights to make these design and development

proposals. Is this development really what we all want? We can do more to protect the interests of Hull's residents and taxpayers so that we, too, benefit from any new development.

I have several thoughts about why this is not a good idea and the following list is not intended to be inclusive as there are many other community voices that have expressed serious concerns.

1. Re: The development will give Hull natives who want to come back to town a chance to do so. This is faulty thinking because these are rental apartments, NOT condos. The main beneficiary of the resources will be the developer. Tenants will just be sinking huge funds into monthly rents without the opportunity to create wealth by entering into a starter home/condominium and paying a mortgage.
2. The tenants, rather than new homeowners, will likely be more transient than homeowners. Do we really want over 132 new households of relatively short-term tenancy? It is said many of the apartments will have 3 bedrooms? Is this for families or for many roommates to share the high rent? What has the market research shown the developer who their potential tenants will be?
3. The dog walk. Placing the tiny dog walk next to the human comfort station is not a good idea. First, the dog walk is quite small, certainly not sufficient for a true walk for a dog. Rather, it will be used for its close proximity for tenants to let their dogs poop and pee outdoors, leaving a smell behind for all visitors to the comfort station as they go about *their* business. What plans are in place to clean and maintain this mini dog walk? Rather than placement next to the human comfort station, why not put it in the back of the building where the smell would not be so intrusive?
4. Traffic. The developer's traffic study team stated "there will be little impact on traffic" in the area. This is hard to believe; recently we had an opportunity to see an impact on traffic when GW Boulevard needed to divert traffic for repairs to a water main pipe that burst due to freezing temperatures. THAT had an impact on traffic without an additional 177+ cars. Also, the former railroad bed designated for much of the development parking is narrow. Will it be wide enough for a sidewalk, parking, driving, walking and access for emergency vehicles? Also, on the evening of the most recent planning board meeting, I arrived home and heard a pack of coyotes howling. If you've never heard the sound, it's quite alarming. I'd not want to be walking on that long stretch of a former railroad bed listening to that sound at 9:30 at night.
5. Green energy – It was stated that the building would be powered by electricity with a small amount of natural gas. There was no mention of solar, geo-thermal or any other green energy. Why is that when "The Town of Hull, MA. established the "Clean Energy Climate Action Committee" (C.E.C.A.C.) in 2019 with the goal of of formulating an actionable plan to bring Hull to 100% renewable energy by the year 2030." (<https://www.hull2030.com/index.html>)
6. Water. When asked about flood water due to high tides and storms, a developers' representative said the water would flow through the garage – nothing more than that for an answer, indicating that their "situational awareness" only extends to their immediate need, with no expressed interest in the overall impact on the town's infrastructure in the neighborhood. The obvious next question is – flow through to where? The town's rented generators? The bay? GW Boulevard?
7. Wind impact. The developer was dismissive when concerns about wind were expressed when, in fact, those of us who live and work in Hull, understand more clearly the impact of wind on our daily lives throughout four seasons of the year. The question deserves to be addressed with more intention.
8. Affordability. The timing of this proposal submission apparently by-passes the current requirement for some percentage of new developments to be affordable. With 132 units – none are considered affordable. This is an affront to all who advocate for more affordable housing units in Hull. The developer is showing their true intention, which is to maximize their profit which they have every right to do but do we, as a community in Hull, have to support this just because it's "legal"?
9. Height – Proposed height is 7 feet taller than the current zoning established with NBOD. Why grant such a waiver? Isn't their square footage enough to make this, for them, a financially viable project? Do they really need to go 7 feet taller than the number agreed to by NBOD, after much careful discussion and decision making?

10. Density and Allocation of square footage – total square footage, minus interior commercial SF, leaves 1036 SF average for the 132 units minus SQ for interior parking and common area space. What is the average size of an apartment? A bedroom? 8x8? Do we really need to provide such small living quarters for 132 residential households? Even if “smaller is better” – these numbers do not provide a reasonable size for living quarters for three bedrooms. For comparison, the Seawatch Condominiums have 31 units. The Paragon Dunes project proposal includes 132 units – will it be more than four times the size of the Seawatch footprint?
11. Impact on community – when asked about shuttles to the ferry or commuter rail station, no commitments were forthcoming by the developer – only a vague sense that this is being considered.
12. Architectural design – the dense nature of the 132 units of housing squished into this property is astonishing really in its blatant attempt to maximize profit for the developer. Again, they have every right to do so – the question remains, does Hull really welcome this level of housing density – with no affordability – in 2024 and beyond? Could a real estate developer create a space without such high density, with home ownership potential, and still be a viable project for their bottom line and for the town?
13. Front Setback – NBOD recommends 10 feet, the proposal = 1.4 feet. Seriously? I’d like to see 20 feet.
14. Claims that the town would benefit by providing housing for more school children. I question the wisdom of that given that home ownership, rather than rental apartments are more desirable for families putting down roots and establishing themselves as members of the school community and community at large. The high cost of rentals is currently prohibiting young families from saving funds needed for a downpayment toward home ownership.

Thanks very much for all you do and for your considered opinion on this project. I urge you to decline this proposal and send the owners back to the drawing board for a more thoughtful, reasonable proposal that benefits both the developer and the Town of Hull.

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