

WESTON

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Weston School Committee

Danielle Black, Chair
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August 8, 2017

Winifred I Li, Chair
Zoning Board of Appeals
Town of Weston
P.O. Box 378
Weston, MA 02493

Re: 104 Boston Post Road

Dear Chairperson Li,

Please accept this letter from the Weston School Committee regarding the proposed development at 104 Boston Post Road. I am sending this letter as it has recently come to my attention that at its July 17, 2017 meeting the Zoning Board of Appeals asked about the school department's position regarding a potential bus stop. My understanding is that members of the development team may have provided information that is not entirely accurate. I submit this letter to clarify the matter.

Of note, I, then Superintendent Robert Tremblay, and Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations Cindy Mahr met with Mr. David Calhoun on Thursday, November 3, 2017 for what I would describe as a perfunctory meeting. The representatives of the school department discussed the timing of the budget process, the current capacity in buildings, and the lack of availability to significantly increase the size of school buildings due to site constraints; all with the goal of supporting effective planning for an anticipated increase in student enrollment if the project at 104 Boston Post Road goes forward. We also discussed the school district's preference for a point of contact at any residential development to confirm residency of potential students and allow for two-way communication regarding expected enrollment projections. Mr. Calhoun has been responsive to this particular request.

In regards to transportation, the representatives of the school district explained the general policies and practices of the Weston Public Schools transportation department. This includes, picking up most elementary students in front of their own house, assigning most secondary students to 'cluster' stops, avoiding bus routes on narrow, dead-end roads, and designing routes to minimize potential opportunities for when a bus would be in reverse. At no point did I or a member of the administrative team state that the school department's preference would be for a 'cluster' stop on Rt. 20 in front of the property. In fact, if asked directly at the November 3rd meeting, we would have said that our preference would be to loop within the development to pick up students. Given the perfunctory nature of the meeting, a two-way dialogue was lacking. My recollection includes that we did advise Mr. Calhoun to contact the transportation department and/or Cindy Mahr if he has any questions.

Apparently, Mr. Calhoun did contact the transportation department, as evidenced by an email that Mr. Calhoun provided to me when I asked him about his statements to the ZBA. I followed up with Mr. Robert Wells, Weston Public Schools' Transportation Coordinator. Mr. Wells told me that he was not informed that the construction at 104 Boston Post Rd was going to be a multi-unit development. The question posed to him was whether the schools would put a stop at 104 Boston Post Rd. Given the volume of traffic, and the fact that any sidewalks or walkways along Rt.20 are maintained by the Commonwealth and not the Town of Weston, Mr. Wells said, "Yes, we would put a stop at 104 Boston Post Rd." Mr. Wells was under the impression that it was going to be a single residence and, like most other residents, we would pick up in front of the dwelling. Such a comment should not be equated to a statement that the school department would consider putting a cluster stop right on Boston Post Road. In fact, our inclination is to object to establishing a 'cluster' bus stop on Rt.20 at this location.

In support of the School Committee's position, I note the bus stop set up at Stonegate in Weston where our buses loop through Jericho Road and pick up students within the development. While a much smaller scale development, the same is true on Livermore Land. Further, while the transportation department designs routes to avoid dead-end roads as much as possible, the bus travels on Trailside Road, picking up elementary students at their house and utilizing the emergency vehicle turnaround because that is a preferred option than picking up a cluster of elementary students at the corner of Trailside Road and Ash Street during the morning commute.

In our conversations with representatives for another proposed residential development in town, the school department has been clear in voicing a strong preference for a bus stop on the property. We iterate the identical preference for the development at 104 Boston Post Road. I can assure you that Mr. Calhoun's statements at your July 17, 2017 meeting could be characterized as misleading, at best. Had Mr. Calhoun explained to Mr. Wells that he was asking about a establishing a 'cluster' stop for a multi-unit development, Mr. Wells would have given a different answer.

Accordingly, in response to ZBA's inquiry as to the school department's position regarding a bus stop, please be advised that the Weston Public Schools strongly prefers a bus stop located within the property and is against a 'cluster' stop on Boston Post Road. To the extent possible, we seek to avoid cluster stops on main roads, particularly for elementary students.

Please feel free to contact me or Vice Chair John Henry if the ZBA has any questions regarding the school's position on this, or any town matter. The members of the School Committee take our responsibilities to best represent the school district seriously and with fidelity. We would always make ourselves available to any town board or committee, and would gladly answer questions directly to the requesting body. Many thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Danielle Black

Danielle S. Black, Chair
Weston School Committee