

**Riverside Station Public Hearing  
2012-10-16**

**Comments from Bruce McVittie  
11 Norumbega Court  
Auburndale, MA 02466**

I did not express this comment at the meeting but think it also relevant.

*While BH Normandy has much to answer for, the MBTA needs to be part of the solution too. The MBTA is, after all, a co-petitioner. If there are issues that the MBTA must or should address, they should be included as conditions in the special permit. For example, why doesn't the MBTA provide direct access to and from the Riverside platform to the existing Riverside Center?*

**Public Comments**

I live at 11 Norumbega Court which is just off of Grove Street and in this location I am one of closest abutters on Auburndale side,

I have a great many concerns about this project but will confine myself to three this evening.

First, traffic

One of the primary concerns with this project has been and continues to be traffic. Much work has been done but clearly not enough. Petitioner has made proposals for the immediate vicinity of the site and virtually ignored the surrounding intersections even though the petitioner's modeling shows deterioration in LOS post-build. Mitigation of traffic impacts on these intersections should either be required or significant, *significant*, funds escrowed for future mitigation when the traffic impacts are fully understood. Mitigation will be required.

However, there is another way to mitigate the traffic effects. The amount of traffic can also be controlled through the type of use that is permitted. I was surprised to see that the petitioner was requesting that Medical offices be allowed. Medical offices and other similar uses that generate a significant, steady stream of short term traffic will just exacerbate what promises to be a difficult situation. Please do not allow these uses.

Second, access

More than four years into this project and proponent still can't tell us how the site will be accessed. I suggest that as part of the special permit that you specify the method of access that will be required and require the conditions that they have built their traffic study on. Specifically, there should be two access points from the site with only one from Grove Street and Option B2 for connection to the CD Road. A maximum of 30% of the traffic may enter or exit the site on Grove Street. The petitioner is asking us to accept a traffic study based on this assumption; the petitioner should commit to the same volume. Why should Auburndale and Lower Falls accept all the risk if the study assumptions are not correct?

Third, the economic impacts

With all the negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods, with all the work that has been done, with the continued uncertainty about what this project actually looks like (see the question of access), with the lack of effort and flexibility on the part of the MBTA and other agencies to find an optimal solution for all parties, I was surprised to see that this project will generate less than \$750,000 of net benefit to the city on an on-going basis. Even that is questionable based on the assumptions made in the study about impacts on the schools and other costs.

To put this in perspective, \$750,000 is just 6% of the Mayor's override request.

If this is a bad project, and I don't see or hear any of the people who will be most affected by it saying that it is anything but that, then please don't feel compelled to accept it. Maybe it's time to send a message back to the proponent and the other agencies that whatever is built at Riverside needs to be better for the city.

While \$750,000 is a meaningful amount of money, it is not so much that this project is a must have for Newton. I would urge you to take the time to get this right. And if this isn't the right project for Newton and the neighborhoods, or the petitioner isn't willing to make it right, then the request for a special permit should be denied.