



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1054

FRANK I. SMIZIK
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CHAIRMAN
House Committee on:
Global Warming and Climate Change

September 23, 2014

Testimony of Frank I. Smizik
Development of Kessler Woods by Chestnut Hills Realty
Newton Town Meeting

Dear Newton Town Meeting Members,

I write today to voice my concern over the development of the Kessler Woods property by Chestnut Hills Realty. The Kessler Woods property is an undeveloped piece of land bordering Brookline residents on Rangeley Road as well as West Roxbury and Newton residents on other sides of the property. In the heavily populated areas surrounding the city of Boston, open space is a cherished commodity. Green spaces in urban areas host a list of benefits to local residents. In addition to providing space for recreational activities, undeveloped areas can help improve air quality and temperature through the presence of plants, which provide shade in the summer and insulation in the winter while removing pollutants from the air. With increasing property values and large percentages of green space under private ownership, undeveloped properties in the Boston area are under the threat of being developed into office and residential buildings instead of being utilized as natural refuges for residents.

Concerns from residents surrounding Kessler Woods have arisen since the sale of the property from Cornerstone Corporation to Chestnut Hills Realty for several reasons. When the land was first purchased by Cornerstone Corporation, a building design was agreed upon by the city of Newton to ensure the natural features of the land, including plants and wildlife, were not completely destroyed by future development. Therefore, the proposed residential building was designed to host 62 condominium units with 131 bedrooms and 146 parking spaces. When the property was purchased by Chestnut Hills Realty, the plans were expanded to include 80 units in the building with 136 bedrooms and 160 parking spaces, a 20% increase in occupancy from the Cornerstone plans. Furthermore, the new development plans call for a building with 3 ½ stories compared to the original 2 stories in the original Cornerstone design. This increase in building scope presents concerns over the destruction of the currently undeveloped land.

In addition to concerns over the extent to which the land will be developed, local residents are concerned about possible neighborhood disruptions during the construction process. Questions about the extent of blasting to create suitable building areas, the location of development entrances, the



building duration (i.e. overall length of project, times of day when construction will occur), and the distance of the new building to abutter property lines have been raised by Rangeley Road residents in Brookline. As the chairman of the House Committee on Climate Change, I urge you to consider the importance of green space during your development plans. Additionally, as the Representative of the 15th Norfolk district, I ask that you address the concerns of my constituents while crafting a development plan for the Kessler Woods property to minimize noise and traffic intrusions on local residents.

Lastly, I ask that Newton requires Chestnut Hills Realty to implement renewable energy into the infrastructure of its proposed building. Utilizing renewable energy sources will allow the building to cut costs while investing in energy sources that produce less carbon emissions than fossil-fuel powered electricity plants. If Chestnut Hills Realty is allowed to build its proposed design, I would ask that the company compensates for its development of Kessler Woods with an investment in more sustainable energy sources, such as solar, wind, or hydropower.

I kindly urge you to consider the environmental and residential impacts of the Chestnut Hills Realty project in the design and development of Kessler Woods. Thank you for listening to my concerns and I am happy to speak with you further on this topic in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank I. Smizik". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Frank I. Smizik
15th Norfolk