

7/22/15

RE: Spring

Dear Members of the Cape Cod Commission:

I have lived in Falmouth since 1983. My parents moved to Falmouth in 1991 from small town upstate New York because they loved the small town atmosphere and the fact that there was a working downtown area that retained its New England charm. They wanted to live in a town where their children (11) and their extended families would want to come visit them. This small town quality that attracted them is reflected in the language of **the Minimum Performance Standards (MPS) HPCC1.2 “The distinguishing original features of an historic or cultural landscape shall be preserved. New development adjacent to or within historic or cultural landscapes shall be located to retain the distinctive qualities of such landscapes and shall be designed to maintain the general scale and character defining features of such landscapes.”**

My 10 siblings and their families visit regularly. As you can imagine, we are in frequent need of lodging for them, including Road Race weekend. We have always been able to find reasonable accommodations for our many, often last minute, guests so I question the need for such a large hotel in the heart of our increasingly busy Main Street area.

We have come to respect and rely on the Cape Cod Commission to protect the special nature of Cape Cod. You have served us well in the past and we thank you for giving all of us the time to present our thoughts, concerns and ideas on the impact of the proposed Springhill Suites by Marriott on both the Town of Falmouth and the region as a whole.

The massive size of the proposed hotel is completely out of character with the vision that we, as residents of Falmouth, have for the continuing redevelopment of Main Street eastward. **The Cape Cod Regional Policy Plan (CCRPP) at HPCC2.4 states the “All development and redevelopment shall be consistent with the region’s traditional development patterns, reflecting features such as modest building mass, height, scale, roof shape, roof pitch, building materials “** It is my understanding that **Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs)** must meet all **MPS**. The scale of buildings should continue to reflect the smaller and more individual local businesses that are enjoyable to visit and view, and with residences and offices above. That kind of building fosters community connections – we get to know the owners and we chose to support them. Our children get to know them as they bicycle to and from the local schools, the library and to shop and meet their friends in the downtown area.

East of the proposed Springhill Suites by Marriott are two obvious exceptions to the “modest building mass” that otherwise characterizes the Main Street landscape – the Falmouth Housing Corporation mixed use building at 704 Main Street and the Mutual Bank building at 668 Main Street. The latter is an example of a building that does not fit the character of the neighborhood and I believe it should not have been approved for building as is. The fact that the bank building is out of character for the landscape should

NOT set the precedent that additional out of character buildings should be built. The Commission has the opportunity to prevent that from happening. The Falmouth Housing Corporation building at 704 Main Street serves an important public function – it provides affordable housing units in a central location and in a **mixed use** setting. Falmouth needs more affordable housing. We do not need to tear down existing housing for parking lots. As you have heard from several Bed and Breakfast owners, Falmouth does not need more hotels on Main Street.

CCRPP ED3.2 encourages “**local ownership of non-formula businesses consistent with the economic, environmental and community character goals of this RPP.**” A Springhill Suites by Marriott which competes with local bed and breakfasts and nearby locally owned hotels and motels is contrary to **Goal ED3** and without demonstrating any need or public benefit as required by **ED4.1**.

Falmouth is proud of encouraging bicycle and pedestrian transportation to reduce motor vehicle traffic congestion and to promote the overall health of our community. Allowing the massive proposed hotel in the heart of this already congested area constitutes a **public safety** hazard to bikers, walkers, joggers and stroller pushers of all ages. Traffic will be pulling in and out all day long from both sides of Main Street crossing to the offsite parking lot and to access the beach and harbor areas in an already very heavily used residential and pedestrian area. **CCRPP TR1.1 states that: “Regardless of project traffic generation, DRIs shall not degrade safety for pedestrians, bicyclists or motor vehicle operators or passengers.”** See my comments in paragraph 4 above about children on bicycles and walking in this area. See also **CCRPP TR1.7**. There is no accommodation that can be made to assure the safety of all users of the adjacent road system. There are many smaller scale projects that could be approved for the Fay property that would not pose this safety hazard while truly benefitting the community and region as a whole.

The affect on public safety posed by this project goes well beyond injuries to pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists as a result of the increase in traffic from the proposed hotel. The proposed hotel is located on a major regional artery which serves the entire Cape Cod area. Public safety issues extend to the inability of Fire and Rescue vehicles to respond easily on Main Street and adjacent roads because of the increased traffic caused by the hotel. Transport to the hospital will be more difficult. The ability of Falmouth’s first responders to assist in regional emergencies (eg. fire and other emergencies in Mashpee) will be hampered because of increased traffic in the heart of downtown Falmouth as a result of this oversized proposed hotel. Evacuation in the event of natural disaster will be hampered as a result of added traffic congestion.

We have already heard testimony that crashes occur weekly at the Nye Road and Main Street intersection weekly but were told that they don’t count unless they are reported. Many fender benders result in minor damage that goes unreported – they still fit the definition of “crash” in the **CCRPP Appendix** and are an indication of the dangerous nature of that intersection. Increased traffic on this regional highway will degrade the safety for all whose use it and deter visitors from other parts of the cape.

Last Sunday – July 19th – I visited the properties on Lantern Lane that will be impacted by this proposed project. Despite attending every hearing to date and listening to all testimony and observing the scaled drawings, I was shocked when I saw that the hotel will be sitting in the front and side yards of homes that previously had a healthy buffer of space and vegetation between them and the Main Street business. That buffer represents the kind of thoughtful planning that we want to promote in Falmouth and throughout Cape Cod. We look out for each other in this town. I hope that the members of the Commission subcommittee and staff have had the opportunity to view the proposed building site from the Lantern Lane homes closest to the proposed building site. Look at the stake in the triangle of green that will no longer be part of the Lantern Lane neighborhood. Instead, the proposed hotel will extend what is now a grassy triangle. If you have had the opportunity to stand in the yards of those residents who will be most directly impacted, please take the time to do so. When you live in a small community, everyone’s yard matters. What happens to one, happens to all. I live a few miles away from the proposed project but I visit Main Street daily. It is in my “back yard” as it is in the back yard of everyone who visits downtown Falmouth and I want to keep it special.

Economic growth at the expense of existing residential environments is not consistent with the regional goals of the Cape Cod Commission **“to protect the unique values and quality of life on Cape Cod by coordinating a balanced relationship between environmental protection and economic progress.”**

Again, thank you for your thorough review of this proposed DRI. I urge you not to approve this project as it does not meet the Minimum Performance Standards of the Act.

Sincerely yours,

Janet Simons
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