

June 22, 2002

Mayor and Commissioners,

There are several elements in what is being proposed in Plan Board Petition 21TCH-02PB that I object to, and I ask that you consider modifying them.

1. One of the recommendations is that a 2-story building height limit should apply to all Multiple-family buildings within 100 feet of the property line of any Single-family designated property. Beyond that 100-foot mark, the building height limits prescribed in the Land Development Code for the Zoning District would apply. This will be a significant improvement and much needed addition to the Code. There's good logic to it and I fully support it.

The recommendation, however, goes on to say that when a lot is less than 2 acres in size (approx 300x300), then *all* buildings on the lot, even buildings beyond the 100-foot mark are to be limited to 2 stories in height. There's no sound basis for this part of the recommendation, and in fact, it would be counterproductive and detrimental in two important ways. First, keeping in mind that the allowed density remains unaltered regardless of building height limit, the allowed number of dwelling units on the lot which *could* have been incorporated into one 3-story building, would now be required to be developed as two separate buildings, thereby doubling the total amount of building footprint on the lot, and significantly reducing the amount of available natural open space. This is definitely something we do not want to do. Secondly, and again keeping in mind that the allowed density and the number of dwelling units allowed on the lot remains unaltered, the higher the number of buildings on the lot significantly increases the probability that one or more multiple-family buildings will be built in closer proximity to the single-family designated properties than if the total number of dwelling units were incorporated into a fewer number of buildings. Again, we're shooting ourselves in the foot.

My recommendation would be to strike "If the multi-family designated site is two or more acres in size" in Attachment 1, Article IV. Use Regulations, Table 3. The 100 foot demarcation line would therefore simply apply to all lots, regardless of size.

2. There is a recommendation that masonry walls at least 6 feet tall be built between all multiple-family development and any single-family designated property. This would have detrimental ecological and sickening social impacts. Combining the natural open spaces between lots increases wildlife habitat opportunities and has significant ecological value. There are times when 1+1=more than 2. Masonry walls are not a requirement anywhere else in the Land Development Code and here we are proposing requiring 6 foot tall concrete walls be built between two types of residential uses. I strongly object to this. If increased buffering between multiple-family development and single-family development is deemed desirable, which I agree is probably a good idea, then a strongly preferable means of accomplishing this would be to simply double the Landscape Buffer Requirements.

7/22/02

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submitted

7/22/02

by Robert Pearce

This would amount to doubling the width of the landscape buffer space, doubling the shrubbery requirements, and doubling the number of required trees along the boundary. Natural open space and wildlife habitat area would be enhanced, and over time a natural, environmentally friendly, 60 foot tall buffer in the form of trees would evolve instead of a mere 6 foot tall ugly concrete wall separating wildlife habitats and people as well. A vegetative buffer is preferable to a concrete buffer and I think everyone would win from this scenario.

My recommendation would be to eliminate the masonry wall requirement and replace it with a doubled Landscape Buffer Requirement.

3. Lastly, there is the recommendation to prohibit balconies on the outside of multiple-family buildings when they are immediately adjacent to single-family designated property. This is sick stuff. Residents of attached building types do not have any semi-private outdoor space they can call their own, and balconies serve an important social function much like the front or back porch does on a single-family house. Balconies also serve an important function in providing architectural articulation on a building wall which might otherwise be quite bland and unattractive. Mention was made by Staff during the Plan Board hearing that balconies could be placed elsewhere from being adjacent single-family properties, but in the real world this would oftentimes be quite impractical. This proposal is mean spirited, unnecessary, and socially detrimental.

My recommendation would be to eliminate the balcony prohibition.

Sincerely  
Robert Pearce