

From: Zelen, Deborah Geier <DZELEN@mgh.harvard.edu>

Sent: Wednesday, July 27, 2022 3:54 AM

To: Sarah Mellish <ZBAChairperson@manchester.ma.us>

Cc: conserve@metc.org <conserve@metc.org>

Subject: Shingle Hill Development

Dear ZBA Chairperson and Members of the ZBA Committee:

I am a 25 year resident of Manchester, writing to ask you and your committee to do everything in your power to protect and maintain Shingle Hill in its current unspoiled state.

I know that our town, like many others, does not meet the targets set for available affordable housing, and that the loopholes associated with encouraging more such housing are utilized, even exploited, by developers in order to obtain expedited approval for large construction projects. My concerns are as follows:

A number of years ago, a developer promised to include X percent of affordable units within in a new development on Route 127 (the former nursing home). However, midway through the project, it was announced that they were not going to market any of the new residences as affordable, and instead made a vague commitment to build a number of units elsewhere in Manchester "on land they already owned". So the developer obtained original approval based on Chapter 40B affordable housing loopholes, built the development, and later abandoned the mandate to include affordable units.

It would be a great shame if this process was repeated with this much larger, more intrusive development, which will permanently alter the natural landscape of the area and eliminate multiple naturally occurring water sources for plants, wildlife, and Sawmill Brook. In 12/21/21, the Gloucester Times published information regarding this particular developer (Geoffrey Engler of Strategic Land Ventures) which stated that Mass Housing had suspended him from submitting affordable housing Chapter 40B applications due to omissions in previous projects (Wellesley and Mashpee). Mr. Engler subsequently stated that this was not an issue with the Shingle Hill proposal, which seems odd, but as the review of the development has continued, it is apparently true.

Mr. Engler and SLV have not ever carried out a project of this size and complexity on an extremely difficult site - it seems foolhardy to let them "learn" at the expense of the environment, our water supply, and even the appearance of the proposed development from Routes 128 and 133. It seems extremely likely that the scope of work will change, perhaps dramatically, once construction begins. There is no way that very limited town resources can adequately monitor the construction to be sure no violations or significant changes are happening - so if there are any, it will be too late. The damage will be done.

Secondly, I'm sure that all members of the committee have noticed that this summer has resulted in a state of "Severe" drought for all of Manchester, Cape Ann, and most of eastern Massachusetts. Our weather patterns have changed, and unfortunately longer, hotter, drier summers and autumns probably lie ahead. Much of the proposed land to be developed consists of vernal pools and wetlands, so much so

that the developer has requested 18+ wetland waivers. In our changing climate it seems short sighted to eliminate land that has been designed by nature to retain water for as long as possible, and which also contributes to the water sources for Manchester.

If the town is forward looking, we should be doing everything possible to keep these wetlands intact for future generations of residents, in addition to the wildlife and plants that depend upon them for survival. We don't need a big residential development in a wooded and unspoiled area - but we will always need water, and land that can both retain it or naturally allow runoff into brooks which contribute to our water supply. Without it, many of the things that make the area so special will disappear.

Please use the authority and expertise of your committee to speak out against allowing the development to go forward. There are better ways to increase our affordable housing in a measured and more careful manner, executed by developers and planners of experience and good repute. Pursuing this goal will always be a priority, but resolving it with this development, in this location, seems very likely to become a lasting regret. You represent us in genuine commitment to preserving the environment, our water supply, and the intertwining of nature and settlement that makes our town the place that it is. Please deny permission and explore other, more reasoned and reliable proposals for additional affordable housing development.

Respectfully,

Deb Zelen

13 Loading Place Road