

Tuesday, March 29, 2022

Millbury Planning Board:

*I would ask that you please post the following on the Planning Board website in the public hearing folder for the “Rezoning To Suburban II A Portion Of Residential I North Of Rice Road” Town Warrant Article.*

For the record, I would like to state that twenty (20) registered voters signed the citizen’s petition in favor of the proposed zoning change on the north side of Rice Road, being most of the properties on the north side of Rice Road. As noted during the public hearing, two households were not able to participate due to medical issues, but support and appreciate the efforts on their behalf. Each signatory was given the opportunity to ask questions about the impacts of such a change, were provided detailed responses to the best of our knowledge and understood the implications prior to agreeing to sign the citizen’s petition. We could have easily obtained more than twenty (20) signatures, but the citizen’s petition only required ten (10) registered voters to be included in the Town Warrant Articles for Town Meeting on May 3, 2022, therefore we focused on those most impacted in the neighborhood, those who reside in the neighborhood on the north side of Rice Road.

This Town Warrant Article did not originate in a vacuum. Neighbors were directly involved in the origins, throughout the process, and support this Town Warrant Article. Neighbors fully understand that the trustees of the Rice Pond Realty Trust or the McLaughlin Family Living Trust have the right to develop their properties. However, the neighborhood simply wants any development to be consistent and compatible with the existing and well-established neighborhood. The Town Warrant Article was not conceived to target any specific landowner, as both zoning districts are residential in nature, Residential I and Suburban II. As noted in the presentation and confirmed by Millbury’s Code Enforcement Officer, there are slight differences between the two zoning districts, and that he saw merit to the Town Warrant Article as written and proposed to be amended on the floor of the Town Meeting. The interests of the Rice Pond Realty Trust or the McLaughlin Family Living Trust do not supersede or negate the rights of the neighborhood. We each have a voice in this process and governance of our town. This Town Warrant Article is exercising our right, through the established democratic process for such a change.

Additionally, I would like to take this opportunity to specifically refute Mr. Paul Mardirosian's public hearing comments submitted via email on March 28, 2022 and posted to the public hearing folder for the “Rezoning To Suburban II A Portion Of Residential I North Of Rice Road” Town Warrant Article.

“Clairify that no one from Rice Pond Realty or McLaughlin Family Living trust has spoken to Mr. Stearns or has agreed to any changes proposed by him. We in fact disapprove of his proposal and his involvememet an any of the towns interests.” — Mr. Paul Mardirosian

I would encourage Mr. Paul Mardirosian watch the [replay of the public hearing](#), so that he can notice that I did not say that I personally had spoken to any of the parties from the Rice Pond

Realty Trust or the McLaughlin Family Living Trust, so [his email message](#) could be perceived as misleading.

What I clearly articulated and is included in the [presentation](#) and posted online, is that the “landowners do not reside at this address; however, they have told at least four neighbors (households) that their intent was to develop the parcels of land as single-family house lots.” At least five people have told me that Kathleen (McLaughlin) Mardirosian, Mr. Mardirosian's wife, intended to develop their combined properties as single-family house lots and that the developer switched it a multi-family development. One of the McLaughlin brothers, either Tim or Sean McLaughlin, who owns/operates the McLaughlin's Service Inc. (gas station) also reiterated to two other neighbors the exact same thing. Therefore, nothing I conveyed was inaccurate or misleading. Mr. Mardirosian is either apparently attempting to confuse the issue; or he is attempting to discredit me in a public forum.

While it is understandable that Mr. Mardirosian would disapprove of anyone's actions or opinions that differ from his own or other parties with a financial interest in either the Rice Pond Realty Trust and/or the McLaughlin Family Living Trust, he should understand that there are competing interests at work; those who are actual residents of the neighborhood and those who would financially benefit from the sale and development of the properties owned by the Rice Pond Realty Trust or the McLaughlin Family Living Trust. When viewed through that lens, it is understandable that Mr. Mardirosian would prefer that I (and others with opposing viewpoints) be silent and not represent the interest of the neighborhood, those who will be most impacted by any adverse development.

As the Planning Board Chairperson, Richard Gosselin, Jr., stated in one of the public hearings, “This [project] is dividing this community.” That is could not be truer a statement.

It is also quite bold of Mr. Mardirosian to state that I should not be involved in any of the town’s interests. Many would disagree with his sentiment.

The basis for the “Rezoning To Suburban II A Portion Of Residential I North Of Rice Road” Town Warrant Article and the amendment that will be offered at the Town Meeting are well researched and sound and has the support of the majority of affect properties, the neighborhood, and beyond. It is perfectly fine if Mr. Mardirosian does not support this citizen’s petition or any of the other efforts that I have put forth on behalf of the neighborhood and town. That is his right. This is a democracy where everyone is entitled to state their opinion; and we can agree to disagree with each other.

It is the majority of the voters of Millbury who will have the final say on the disposition of this citizen’s petition.

Best,

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Steve Stearns