

February 22, 2017

Dear neighbors -

I'm sorry for the mass mail, but I'm working with a collection of neighbors to spread the word about a planned development that is under consideration in Boxborough. www.BoxboroughTownCenter.org

In a nutshell, two teams of developers (both with a 'storied' history in town... and its not a good story) are involved in a plan to add a private (gated) community of 100 units (a mix of 2 and 3 bedrooms each) in a wetland. The complex will include a pool and rec complex (only for residents).

How does this relate to a Boxborough Town Center? Well, the location is on a plot of land (between 111, Stow Rd and Burroughs) that was *previously* zoned for a walkable, mixed use Town Center for all town residents.

That zoning has since been changed, but the developers (registered as 'Boxborough Town Center, LLC') submitted the purely residential plan prior to the zoning change, so they are technically allowed to build housing at a high-density, minimal-setback community.

I have a whole host of concerns, notably added traffic (they are making a new entrance onto 111, with 'emergency' access via Sheriffs Meadow on Stow, and Priest Lane onto Burroughs), impact on the water table, the wetlands, and light pollution that comes with that large and dense a settlement.

Adding to that, the track record of this development team is NOT encouraging. The Town has already sued them (and won) for broken promises and fraud on a previous development - and I think there were others.

<http://boxboroughtowncenter.org/2017/02/20/a-long-history-with-fenton-jeanson-boxborough-town-center-llc/>

Anyway, my goal is NOT to ask you to object to this plan. But I DO hope that you will learn more, and get involved to make sure your own concerns are voiced and heard.

A few neighbors have gotten together to post details and news, which you can find at www.BoxboroughTownCenter.org, or email me and I can add you to our closed Facebook group (Boxborough Town Center). We'll also send out email updates if you want to opt in for those (email me, or via the website).

If you'd rather get updated in person, Cord and I will host an afternoon open house on Sunday 2/26. We'll have snacks, and feel free to bring the kids over to play while we chat and share news / facts. Just let me know and I will add you to the invitation.

Finally, and most importantly, the Town needs to see that residents have concerns. **MONDAY FEB 27th is a Planning Board Meeting** to learn more, and to have issues addressed by the

owners / developers. The town just moved the location to the **LIBRARY (7:30 pm)** - presumably due to the attention we've been getting. Our website already has over 1000 visits!

Please check out the website, reach out to me to join the email list, or the Facebook group. Consider joining us on Sunday, and PLEASE attend the meeting on Monday.

Feel free to share to anyone you know in town... I'm sending this to the parent lists from Izzy's two classes at Blanchard - maybe you could pass along to former class lists of yours, too?

Thanks for listening!
Heather

PS - a new development is already under construction just over the border in Stow - the same group! They certainly don't look like affordable senior housing, to me. :(
<https://www.tollbrothers.com/luxury-homes-for-sale/Massachusetts/Regency-at-Stow>

March 20, 2017

Hello again -

I am sending a short update / reminder about the Planning Board Hearing - tonight at 7:30! - regarding the application by Fenton & Jeanson (and the Toll Brothers), aka "Boxborough Town Center, LLC" that is under consideration.

The property will add 100 units of 2- and 3-bedroom housing, and a private recreation center (including pool) across from Town Hall, on a wetland between Blanchard school and Flerra Park.

Before going any further, I want to emphasize that *this is NOT a "done deal"* - many of us (myself included) have been inclined to feel that this development is an eventuality, and any public comment period is largely formality / window-dressing. This is NOT so.

I have recently been assured that the Planning Board (who are made of elected officials!), do have an active voice in the future of this project. They are not only able, but are **obligated** to take our concerns to heart, and incorporate feedback from the Town into any decision making that is made on this proposal / permitting process.

*So, let me say that one more time: **Your Voice Does Matter.***

But if we don't have a visible attendance, with vocal questions comments raised at the Hearing tonight, our opportunity to comment may be closed. That said, as long as we keep raising issues, the comment process will continue.

Specifically, the public hearing tonight is designed to a) give residents a chance to have their voices heard / raise any concerns / ask any questions, and to b) give the Developers a chance to explain their responses to the concerns that have been raised, to date.

I have attached a slightly annotated version of two of the documents they will likely discuss:

1. Developer's responses to the Planning Board and the Site Plan audit (*most of them seemed to just be "No. We don't have to."*)
2. Developer's contracted 'Fiscal Impact Analysis', prepared with Boxborough in mind. (Includes some sketchy math and celebration of the \$ that will be spent in town on "groceries and dining establishments". right.)

I will print copies of both documents to bring tonight, but if you want to be sure of your own copy to follow along, please bring a digital or physical one with you. (And many more public record documents are linked on our website: www.boxboroughtowncenter.org - since Fenton and Jeanson didn't register the domain... despite registering Boxborough Town Center, LLC.... ?

As I said in my Facebook post, the proposal is on private property, Yes.

BUT - 100 new households, on Town Center zoned land, with its own roads, gates to prevent access to a large private pool and recreation complex (and that may impede first responders?!) next to the

wetland... there are so many dimensions of this proposal that impact Boxborough residents. And wildlife. And traffic. And the water table. And light pollution. And deforestation. And massive blasting / construction for YEARS.

Come to the meeting tonight.

Be involved in an issue where - to repeat - *your voice matters*.

Hope to see you there. (We've arranged to have close to twice as many chairs!)

Heather

PS - I don't mind if you cut and paste or forward to share outside this group. Please also include a link to www.boxboroughtowncenter.org, and that the meeting is at the Boxborough Community Center (across from town hall) on March 20th, 7:30 pm.

PPS - I know there is a meeting at the library that conflicts with tonight's hearing. To clarify, I am *absolutely* in favor of all of us having a voice in the new school building comment process that is beginning this week. However, there will be *several* of the open comment presentations that we can attend, all of which will cover the same material. So, I do believe it is possible to miss tonight's school meeting, and attend the Planning Board Hearing, and still have plenty of opportunities to participate in the AB school planning.

PPPS: Please don't hesitate to let me know if you preferred to be removed from this digital conversation. As an alternative (or a complement), we also have a Facebook group (see <https://www.facebook.com/groups/boxboroughtowncenter/> to ask to be added), and you can always just check www.boxboroughtowncenter.org for updates.

March 21, 2017

Hello -

Last night's meeting had almost 100 people in attendance, lasted close to 4 hours (!), and covered a LOT of ground.

We recorded the entire meeting (in 5 different live videos, as each phone battery died..), and we broadcast it in our Facebook group. We had as many as 15 people watching live, and most of the videos have between 40 and 50 views already.

I haven't found a way to share the videos outside of the group, but if you join (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/boxboroughtowncenter/>), you can see the videos and comments anytime. We'll post a summary on boxboroughtowncenter.org soon, too.

The Public Hearing will continue on May 1st. If you'd like to be involved in any way, please let me know.

One option, now that the snow is melting, we are considering investing in a bunch of 'lawn signs' to point people to the website for updates, and to remind residents that this question is still ongoing. ***If you would be willing to put one in your yard, and/or pitch in a few dollars to a 'sign fund' please let me know.***

Otherwise, I likely won't blast out to this list again till closer to the next meeting, but if you'd like more frequent email updates, just let me know - I can make a smaller list of recipients for weekly / biweekly summaries.

Overall, everything I heard from the Board members last night suggests that they are Not in favor of the current plan. But it is up to us to continue to give them reasons to push back, or at least for considerable adjustments / scaling back.

thanks!
Heather

April 5, 2017

Hello fellow residents!

Here's an update regarding the Town Center development proposal (and some upcoming community events, at the end of the list). As always, updated info is available on our community website, www.boxboroughtowncenter.org

1. You'll see our signs popping up around town - I've already given out over 1/3 of the large order, so if you'd like one for yourself (and/or a neighbor?) please reach out to me and I can either drop them off or arrange a time for you to pick one up.

Thanks to several generous donors, the signs are already 1/2 paid for, so I'm happy to give them out to anyone willing to post one - but contributions are also welcome from anyone who feels so inclined. The final cost came to \$4/sign.

2. The Public Hearing will be continued on **May 1st, 7:30pm at the Community Center (across from Town Hall)**. There will likely be another round of responses from the developers, followed by an opportunity for residents to make comments or ask questions.

We hope to have another great turn out to continue sending the message that our concerns have not been addressed, and that we are not going to 'fade away' and let them move forward with the current plan simply due to default / lack of objection.

For those who absolutely can't make it to the session, we'll do another ***Facebook Live video from the session*** (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/boxboroughtowncenter/>). *We can also ask questions on your behalf if you comment during the event itself.*

3. The Beacon *finally* covered the proposed development last week. <http://acton.wickedlocal.com/news/20170331/boxborough-residents-concerned-over-proposed-senior-housing-development>

Most of us were fairly disappointed with the article, as it doesn't even touch on most of the concerns that have been raised, especially the history of Fenton & Jeanson in our town, and neighboring ones. **At this stage, we think our best course of action is to encourage a letter writing campaign, both to the Beacon, and to Town Officials.** If you check our website (www.boxboroughtowncenter.org) in the coming days, we will post a list of addresses to help direct any letters you choose to write.

4. We are still waiting on the formal comment period on the **EIR (Environmental Impact Report)**, and are keeping an eye on the scheduling of a public hearing on the developer's '**W-District Special Permit**' submission to the Zoning Board of Appeals from last year. It is currently scheduled to meet on June 6th, but may still be postponed - we'll keep you posted on both matters.

5. I attended a really interesting gathering of the '**Bettering Boxborough Together**' community group last night. They presented some interesting data from the recent census (see one figure, attached) that highlights the changing demographics in town.

This group is working hard to collect feedback from residents regarding how we can find new ways to gather and interact as a community. A lot of great ideas were discussed, along with a lot of interest in sidewalks, a community gathering place (cafe?), and improving connections between long-time residents and seniors with newer-to-town residents and families.

*I feel like this theme is ***exactly*** what is motivating most of us on this email list, and those who are pushing hard for the town to come together to learn more and share our voices about the Town Center debacle.* I encourage you to check out their group, they are easiest to find at their Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/BetteringBoxboroughTogether/>

6. Finally, the Boxborough Conservation Trust annual meeting will be held tomorrow night (4/6, 7pm) at the Library (<https://bctrust.org/>), with a Keynote speech from Professor Grant Garven, Department of Earth and Ocean Sciences, Tufts University. ***He will discuss the science of groundwater relevant to Boxborough geography and geology, including aspects of the drought, effects on water quality, and the impact of well field development.*** Sounds entirely relevant and timely! I hope to be there, and will bring some of my Red website signs with me in case anyone wants to pick one up there.

Thanks for listening, and for staying updated. Please feel free to forward to others who may not be on this mailing list.

And let me know if you'd prefer to be removed. I'm trying hard not to bother anyone too often, but I know not everyone checks Facebook or our website for updates.

best wishes,
Heather

April 30, 2017

Good evening,

Here is my monthly update / reminder, that in addition to next week's Annual Town Meeting (May 8th), there is another important meeting that I hope you will consider attending **tomorrow**.

Monday, May 1st @ 7:30pm at the Boxborough Community Center (30 Middle Road, across from Town Hall) is the next installment of the Planning Board's public hearing for the proposal from Fenton, Jeanson & John Lyons (also known as 'Boxborough Town Center, LLC') to sell our only 'Town Center' zoned land to the Toll Brothers, who will spend the next ~5 years selling and constructing ***100 units of 2- and 3-bedroom housing, and a private recreation center (including pool), on a wetland just up the road from Blanchard, between Town Hall and Flerra Park.***

It will look like [this one they are building right now in Stow](#) (see the link in the caption of the image of the deforested land)

I'm NOT saying that this proposal should be denied outright.

But, as a community we have an obligation to participate in the planning and consideration of such a significant proposal.

It is part of why we've all chosen to live here, in this environment, and with each other.

Please, let us decide together, rather than letting interest dwindle and permits become granted without everything being asked.

Because without continued attention and interest from residents, the comment period will be closed.

I, for one, still have a LOT of unanswered questions, especially about the safety and potential impact of the *significant* blasting that will be required to flatten this elevated area of rock/shelf (the State demands no more than 5% grade throughout a 55+ community).

Who will do this work? Fenton and Jeanson? Or other contractors that they have hired before? Their track record here is less than stellar.

Do we really know what impact that significant physical change will have on our Town's water? (let alone the climate and eco-system change that will follow the loss of trees, topsoil, drainage, and endangered animals and plants).

What impact will *one hundred* densely-packed homes have on our night sky? On traffic on our roads? On line-ups at the transfer station?

Do our local seniors need 2- and 3-bedroom, multi-story houses with 2 car garages that cost from \$550,000-\$750,000? How is that 'downsizing'?? How will a private/gated, purely residential senior housing complex create a 'walkable, local community' for Boxborough citizens?

Can we renegotiate some kind of plan that will incorporate *some* aspect of what was envisioned when the Town Center zoning was created?

Is the town thinking about the residents-at-large and the character of our town? Or is it focused on the tax income that 100 new households will bring? It is true, the anticipated income could help pay for many requested high-budget items (we'll vote on those next week...) But will we need to further expand our police, fire, and DPW departments - especially considering that another 244-unit housing development is about to open at Paddock Estates (by 495/Dunkin Donuts)?

I hope to see you there! Please bring your questions and your neighbors, too.

We're depending on word-of-mouth (and our lawn signs), since we've been seemingly shut out by the Beacon, despite many requests to have them cover this central issue to our town.
- Heather

PS - We will also broadcast via Facebook Live - but please come in person if you can. If you join our closed group (see <https://www.facebook.com/groups/boxboroughtowncenter/> to ask to be added), you can watch live (and ask us questions that we can relay), and also review the material after-the-fact. The Town is NOT recording the proceedings, but the Developers are... so we are making our own record to share with you.

PPS - I don't mind if you cut and paste or forward to share outside this group. Please also include a link to www.boxboroughtowncenter.org, and that the meeting is at the Boxborough Community Center (across from town hall) on May 1st, 7:30 pm.

PPPS: *Please don't hesitate to let me know if you preferred to be removed from this digital conversation. And you can always just check www.boxboroughtowncenter.org for updates, or sign up for notifications when new blog posts are added. We built the website (since the domain was unclaimed!!) to share what information we can gather.*

May 14, 2017

Hi -

It's me again - writing about the Town Center land development proposal.

I'm sorry if these messages are feeling repetitive, but there are some important news items to share in this note, including:

- links to the NEW design of the development
- info about how to participate at tomorrow's Public Hearing
- and an invitation to a community gathering at our house on Memorial Day

1. All the attention is **working**! A [new plan has been posted](#), and in it the developers have:
- DECREASED the number of homes to 81 (though now they are all single family homes, and the density has actually *increased*)
- MOVED the pool so that it is in the uplands away from 111 (though now they'll have even more *blasting* to do on the ledge to build it)
- ADDED a proposal to make the wetland area near 111 an undefined Public Access space (though given the type of land there, it is unclear if the public would or could actually use it)

2. While there are some encouraging changes, the new plan still has MAJOR concerns for the 150+ people who have been following the changes on Facebook and on the website (>3800 views!).

*We are concerned that they will try to push this revised plan through **quickly**, and that could happen if we don't show up in large numbers* (with lots of questions) for the next 2-3 meetings, at least. Here's a link to more info: <http://boxboroughtowncenter.org/2017/05/11/new-plan-posted-attend-may-15th-for-full-details/>

So, I am back to ask you to *please* consider joining us at the Library tomorrow night at 7:30pm(The Public Hearing portion begins at 7:45, but if we get the turn out we are hoping for it would be better to arrive early to get a seat.).

If you do come, please be sure to sign in - it helps a lot to have an accurate head count.

If you absolutely can't make it (I understand!!), please consider joining the Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/boxboroughtowncenter/>) and watching in on our Live feed. You'll be able to watch it after-the-fact in that same group, but if you join during the meeting we may be able to ask questions on your behalf.

Finally - Cord and I have decided to throw a big open house (hopefully open yard!) discussion gathering for Memorial Day.

The parade goes past our house (140 Stow Rd), so feel free to come watch from our yard, and then come BACK after the ceremony at the cemetery for an informal gathering of anyone who'd

like to share thoughts, comments, and ideas about how our community might continue to respond to ongoing developmental proposals in town. *All opinions welcome.*

Some neighbors who are abutters are willing to offer 'viewings' of the Town Center zoned land from their yards, too.

I'll likely have popcorn and iced tea on hand, but if we end up with critical mass and interest, I'm also happy to morph it into a (mostly spontaneous) community BBQ - **so if you plan to drop by and guess you might stay thru lunch, please comment and I'll shop accordingly.**

We could also turn it into a giant potluck, but I genuinely have no idea how many of us might be interested. Could be fun, though!

June 4, 2017

Greetings,

I apologize for the late notice, but I'm writing to send an update about the scheduled Planning Board Hearing (still continued, and will be while we still have unanswered questions) **Monday, June 5th**.

The meeting will be at the Community Center, 30 Middle Road - across from Town Hall. The [Planning Board meeting will begin at 7:30](#), but the *BTC development is scheduled to be discussed at 8:15*.

It is unclear what specifically will be on the agenda, but I expect that there will be an update to explain whether (and why) the developers appear to have returned to their earlier, larger scale, plan of 100 units of 2-family housing, versus the 'new' plan they unveiled 3 weeks ago that proposed 81 single family homes.

While this plan was pitched as a compromise in response to the concerns raised in these meetings (ie, *that they were listening to the town and trying to adjust*), the Planning Board raised that the 2012 by-laws (which are the ones that apply to this proposal) would require a [collection of additional permits](#) to build single family homes. The latest documents seem to indicate that the developers have given up on their compromise plan.

It was interesting to read the permits they would have needed for these single family homes (which would have made them as much, if not more money than the 100 unit version, based on [their pricing in Stow](#)), since it very much highlights that this zoning of Town Center land was never intended to be a housing-centric development. But, again, since the applicants submitted their proposal for a purely housing (plus private rec center) **before** the zoning loophole was closed in 2013, they are seemingly within their rights to build something that has zero resemblance to the Town Center that was originally planned (by one of the owner/applicants, no less).

At the meeting tomorrow night, I also expect to hear from the applicants about recently filed, detailed plans for the housing architecture and lighting plans. You can find links to these on the landing page of our website at www.borboroughtowncenter.org.

I also anticipate that several people will re-raise a whole host of concerns about traffic changes on 111. At the last meeting, [a review of the applicants' traffic study](#) was presented. It is insufficient to say that 'questions were raised' - you can actually watch the [discussion yourself here](#), if you join our [Facebook group](#). Let's just say that the very bare minimums of sight lines are being planned, even though even the report reviewer seemed to indicate that longer site lines are preferable. AND all of the calculations were made as though no one was speeding. I'll be very curious to see when the State has its [open comment period for the entire MEPA process](#), which will be the time for residents to raise any concerns about traffic on a MASS-DOT road, as well as any environmental issues. Also, no traffic studies have been done on Priest/Burroughs or Stow Road.

Wow. Sorry for this note being so long, and also more biased than I generally try to be. I do have a collection of personal opinions about this land, and it's potential development, but I usually try to keep those largely to myself.

I will re-emphasize that my primary goal of sending these messages is to encourage anyone who is able to attend these meetings. For communities like ours to *be* communities, we need to both have a voice, and also have a chance to *listen* to others - even if their opinions differ from our own. With all of the meetings (formal and informal) in which I have participated since January, I've had a number of 'eye openers' from hearing such a range of perspectives, and experiences. *I truly believe that this issue is helping bring us together as an active, engaged, and collaborative community.*

But the discussion is not over - and the final decisions are far from made. (Indeed, the plan for this property seems to have changed at least 4 times since I started watching it - and I genuinely hope that there are still more significant changes to come).

So, with that, I will say again that I hope to see many of you out tomorrow evening. For those who can't make it (and I can think of a LOT of very reasonable things that would keep many of you at home), we'll do our best to have the live feed (and archived recordings) available in the Facebook group. And I will certainly send a more timely update / summary this time.

Please do keep reminding your neighbors to check out our website, too. And, we'll have a table at [Fifer's Day](#)! Stop by to see some copies of whatever plan happens to be current at that time. We'd be happy to bring you up to date with what we've been hearing, and how you might consider getting involved around any of the aspects that are most of interest to you.

all the best,
Heather

PS - please don't hesitate to let me know if you prefer not to receive these emails. I am trying to be very careful to not over-send, and also to respect the wishes of anyone who'd prefer to be removed. By contrast, you are welcome to forward these notes, and I'm happy to add others to my recipient list. You can email me directly, or send a note to hello@boxboroughtowncenter.org

June 22, 2017

Happy Summer!

Here are a few updates about the Town Center development proposal, along with a reminder / plea / request for as many people as possible to:

1. Attend the Public Hearing @ the Library, Monday June 26, 8:30 pm
2. Participate in that same public hearing, either in person by sharing your views / concerns / preferences in regards to this process, or by chatting with a neighbor or community member who shares your views and who may raise these points on your behalf
3. Send any written requests or concerns or correspondence to our Town Planner, Adam Duchesneau (aduchesneau@boxborough-ma.gov) who will enter those letters into the file of material received by the Planning Board, to use in their decision on this project
4. Speak to your neighbors and friends and point them to our website (www.boxboroughtowncenter.org) for updates and details - we still have a few free lawn signs, too!

As for updates, I have to say that I was thrilled to meet so many community members at Fifer's Day last weekend. My husband Cord and I were at our booth talking to people about this project for essentially the entire fair.

It was both gratifying and alarming (if that is possible) that SO many of those we spoke to had still *never heard* of what has been proposed on this property. Then again, we did have quite a few visitors comment that they'd seen the signs and wanted to know more. And of course many of you who have been following all along who just stopped in to see the large format maps (and say hi!).

What did we hear from the community? Well, I'd say the most common things said to me were:

- "What can I do about this?" (join the discussion / make constructive suggestions)
- "Isn't this a 'done deal'?" (no, it isn't - please see below)
- "Won't it impact the water in town?" (perhaps - but we really don't know without more data)
- "Can't they just make it into a real town center?" (I'd love that! But we'd have to make a case for it - again.)
- "Will there be a traffic study for the side roads?" (Not unless we push for one - then, maybe?)
- "What is the environmental impact?" (Also unknown - but we are monitoring the MEPA process, and waiting for the Public Comment period to open.)
- "Will they put in sidewalks anywhere?" (currently, sidewalks are only proposed on 111 to connect the development to existing path at Stow Road)
- (I'm leaving out the comments about the owners/developers/Toll Brothers - but there were a lot of points raised on those fronts, too.)

Overall, I think these are the biggest take-home updates to keep in mind:

1. Due to the summer schedules of the Planning Board members, Monday's meeting may be the last Public Hearing till the fall - though there may be one scheduled in early August. That makes June 26th ***the best time to raise specific points or requests*** for any studies (traffic, water, environmental, design, etc) or consideration of changes or updates (moving the homes closer to 111, changing the road access on either 111 or Priest or Stow, reducing the scope of the development, changing the scope back to a mixed-use format, including sidewalk access to connect the public roads, etc), so that the Planning Board and the applicants can consider these comments over the coming months.

2. One more time for emphasis, ***the Planning Board *can* say no***. At a previous meeting Adam read out the text of the conditions under which the PB can deny the applicant's proposal. I spoke about this often on Fifer's day, and finally found the specific language that was used. A no vote can happen if the application is outside of the (2012) by-laws, OR if:

"A Site Plan where, although proper in form, may be so intrusive on the needs of the public in one regulated aspect or another that rejection by the Planning Board would be tenable. This would typically be a case in which, despite best efforts, no form of reasonable conditions could be devised to satisfy the problem with the plan."

I read this to mean that while the Planning Board can add their own conditions to any approval that they grant to any applicant, ***without input regarding the 'needs of the public' on matters that can be considered via 'best efforts'***, it would not be tenable for them to deny the applicant.

In other words - speak now... or forever hold your peace.

So - will you come and speak? Or at least listen and learn more?

I'm hopeful that this coming Hearing will include some perspectives that have not been heard from thus far, and that will speak to some of the **history of the property** and the zoning decisions that ended up putting this whole process in motion.

I look forward to learning more, to hearing from more members of the community, and especially to hearing some specific requests put forward by small groups of residents who share common concerns or preferences.

If you would like to **connect with people who share your views**, I am happy to send e-introductions to a few people who I know are coordinating together about:

- a) water table issues
- b) environmental / conservation issues
- c) traffic and sidewalk issues
- d) responsible development (eco-friendly and 2030-centric designs)

e) mixed-use 'true' Town Center planning

If there is an issue that you'd like to discuss at length that is not on this list, let me know! If you are concerned, you can be pretty confident that someone else is thinking the same thing.

Ok - I had planned to keep this short... and failed. ;)

But I hope to see you on Monday night at the Library. As always, we'll do our best to broadcast the meeting in our Facebook group - since I know not everyone can get out in the evenings. I will do my best to answer questions in real-time, and even try to raise your concerns by proxy, if I get an opportunity.

Thanks to everyone! It really meant so much to me to meet so many of you last weekend, and see and hear so much interest in becoming engaged in our Town.

Heather

PS - Look for our (yellow) insert and article in this week's Action Unlimited! The funding for all the printing was donated by a collection of concerned residents... not abutters! :)

PPS - feel free to forward, and/or ask to be added to the distribution list.

PPPS - I will absolutely remove your email address at your request.

August 3, 2017

Greetings - and happy 'midsummer' (at least for those of us with school-aged kids),

It has been awhile since I sent an update, but I have a collection of upcoming community events to announce, as well as some news (*please read to the bottom if you are interested in trees on Burroughs Road, and/or soil removal on Codman Hill Rd*):

1. We are hosting a community potluck cookout on August 13th, and would like to invite any and all who'd like to chat about the Town Center development - or just come to meet some other locals. [Details on the website, here](#) - and please do [let us know](#) if you are coming! :)
2. We are arranging to have a booth at the [town Harvest Fair](#) (a lovely small town event, if you've never been!), so please look for us there on September 9th - and we'd love some volunteers if you'd like to help staff the event.
3. The next Planning Board meeting / Public Hearing is set for [Monday, September 11th](#) - location still tbd. I honestly don't know if this will be the last opportunity to speak, or not. It will depend a lot on whether there are new comments, requests, studies, input from the developers and/or community members. I am hoping to conduct a 'crowd sourced' traffic study to submit, and that may prolong the public session - we'll see. But please don't count on it - if you'd like to have your voice heard, **now is the time**.
4. Speaking of voices, I'm excited to report that our [Facebook group](#) has reached 200 members, and our [website](#) has been viewed over 6000 times! We've been covered recently in the [Beacon](#), mentioned in the [Globe](#), listed in the [Action Unlimited](#), and there may be upcoming coverage in another non-local paper coming, too (stay tuned).
5. Please keep your eyes peeled while driving on 111 near the [proposed entrance to the development](#). We are waiting for the Planning Board to do a site visit with the Developers to [visibly mark the proposed new roadway](#). I am going to try to take some photos to post this weekend, too (the links I've added here are just from Google maps).
6. Due to the overwhelming (and growing) groundswell of interest in establishing a venue (or venues!) for community members to gather **in town**, there are a few groups working on a collection of ideas / plans. I've been involved in some of these discussions, and so far all I can say is that they are quite exciting to me! I'll pass on more info as it becomes share-able... but if you have thoughts on this subject I hope you'll join the conversation online, or in person at the Cookout or the Harvest Fair.

I'll leave it short and sweet this time - we're all on vacation and don't want to be reading a lot of email!

But I do hope you'll make note of the upcoming events, and also ***consider sending an email to the Planning Board*** (via our Town Planner, [Adam Duchesneau](#) - aduchesneau@boxborough-

[ma.gov](#)). This is a great option for those of us who want to weigh in, but are either unable to participate in the Public Hearings for any reason.

Some things that you might include in your note:

"The proposed site plan for the Town Center zoned land makes me feel... "

"I hope that the Planning Board considers XXX in the course of their deliberations."

"I would be happier with the proposed development if it was altered to include / exclude..."

"My primary concerns regarding development of the Town Center zoned land are..."

"My personal experience with Fenton & Jeanson / Toll Brothers has been..."

"I support / do not support Planning Board members who approve this application."

Thanks for considering it! The information I have suggests that the Planning Board members are absolutely incorporating our feedback into their decision and/or conditions that the require of the applicants.

best wishes,
Heather

PS - If you'd like to help out with our community traffic study (on Burroughs and Stow roads), please let me know. I've offered to supply refreshments, but need some help with human car-counters. :)

PPS - I just looked at the Planning Board agenda for *this* Monday's meeting (8/7), and noticed there is a [public hearing re LELD's application for Tree Removal on Burroughs Road](#), and another Public Hearing for a permit to remove stone wall and 500 cubic yards of earth from Codman Hill Road (I didn't think they could do that??).

August 31, 2017

Greetings,

In a blink of an eye, we've reached Labor Day weekend. I have a lot of news and events to share, but will try to keep it succinct:

1. The next Public Hearing is set for **Monday, September 11th at 8pm @** Sargent Memorial Library. Please attend to listen (I am anticipating several new questions / comments / data submissions to the Planning Board), and add your voice to the rapidly-closing discussion forum. Come hear about a resident-driven traffic study, History of the Developers, location of the new Roadway - and more!

2. Because the Planning Board is encouraging we raise **only new** points, we'd like to encourage all residents to WRITE to them (email is fine!) to share what issues or unanswered questions are of primary importance to you. We want them to see the depth / quantity of concerns we keep hearing about from community members, even if someone else has already raised the same point. Emails c/o [Adam Duchesneau](mailto:aduchesneau@boxborough-ma.gov) - aduchesneau@boxborough-ma.gov are perfect. Example letters can be found on our website, here: <http://boxboroughtowncenter.org/2017/08/22/letters-from-the-community/>

3. To make it even easier for you to send your views to the Planning Board, we have started an (unbinding) PETITION / electronic vote for this application - it takes less than 30 seconds of your time: <http://boxboroughtowncenter.org/2017/08/30/petition/>

The link requires you to vote and *add your name / address so that we can count it*. There are optional boxes for you to indicate which issues concern you most, and to type a short note that we will send to the Planning Board (anonymously, if you choose). My goal is to get at least 200 responses, and we're already at almost 60!

4. If you'd like more information before you write in your views and/or sign the Petition, we will have volunteers at the **Transfer Station on Saturday (9/2)**, and a booth at the **Harvest Fair (9/9)**. There are event listings / details about both in the Action Unlimited - thanks to many donors for helping with the printing costs! (*Volunteers to hand out flyers at both are also still sought!*)

5. The development has been featured in the Worcester Business journal, and the article has some interesting insight into the mindset of commercial developers in town: <http://boxboroughtowncenter.org/2017/08/21/coverage-of-our-community-efforts-in-the-worcester-business-journal/>

6. Based on a **huge** number of comments/messages/conversations asking for a local community gathering space - more like a 'cafe', as opposed to a rent-able group meeting space such as what is already available at the Library or Community Center across from Town Hall, I'm working on a plan to pilot a **'drop-in' cafe (self-serve) and lounge** that could be made available either on a membership or fee-for-use basis to Boxborough residents.

The proposal I'm working on would rely *heavily* on volunteers, and would provide both common spaces and a reservation-driven 'living room' cozy space that could be booked for small group use (book clubs, play groups, craft classes, etc). I love the idea of adding a consignment / swap shop, too - space permitting. There are 'polls' posted in the Facebook group and also on Nextdoor.com if you'd like to help me figure out if we have critical mass to bring this concept to life.

I think that is it! Thanks for reading, and I hope to see you soon (digitally, on the Petition, and in person at the Harvest Fair and especially at the Hearing on 9/11!)

Heather

September 11, 2017

Greetings Boxborough Community,

I'll keep this reminder email short, though with a large influx of newsletter recipients (via sign-ups at the Harvest Fair, and via our [petition](#)), I've pasted two of the last emails to the bottom of this note. Welcome!

(also, if you prefer to be removed from this list, please just let me know - I really don't want to spam anyone against their will!)

The main messages I'm writing to share today are:

1. The latest Public Hearing is TONIGHT, at the Library, starting at 8:00pm. The Board convenes at 7:30, but the BTC agenda item will not start till 8:00. I do expect a strong turnout, so if you want a seat, you might consider arriving closer to the 7:30 start time.

As in the past, the Developers and the PB will discuss their recent correspondence (you can find links to all of that [info on our community site](#)), followed by the Public Comment period.

I've heard from residents that there are several planned questions regarding ongoing concerns about traffic & water, but also some new issues regarding the actual scope of the anticipated blasting and a recounting of direct experiences with Fenton/Jeanson as well as Toll Brothers. I hope you'll join us, and if you are stuck at home, please ['tune in' on Facebook, in our group](#).

2. We have almost 200 signatures on the Petition already! That is more people than attended Town Meeting in 2016. I'll have copies to circulate at the meeting tonight (remember - all members of your household can sign!), [or you can use the online link](#)... its also an easy way to send a short letter to the Planning Board (an optional box on the survey).

I'll leave it there for now, but hope to see you tonight!

Heather

September 27, 2017

Hello again -

I would normally say, 'I hope everyone is enjoying the Fall weather', but based on how melted we all looked at Blanchard's Open House last night, I think that I'll just stick with 'Good morning'. :)

Three quick sections in this newsletter:

I: Event reminders

II: News Updates

III: Action Items

I: Events

The biggest item for your calendars is **Monday, October 2nd, 8:00pm**, Boxborough Community Center (30 Middle Road, across from Town Hall).

I know I even sound like a broken record to my own ears, but it REALLY is important to attend these hearings. The last one revealed a LOT of new information, and was [covered in the Beacon](#) (finally!). We had over 100 people 'tune in' during the event via the [Facebook Live video](#), but we also need attendees in the room. I honestly do not know whether the Public Hearing will be closed after this meeting or not - I have been getting conflicting signals when I ask. But, the Planning Board will surely start deliberating SOON. So, I hope you can attend, if your schedule allows.

II: News

The main news to share is that there has been a considerable 'uptick' in community activity since the last Public Hearing. In other words, I've seen a large number of residents [sending letters to the Planning Board](#), contacting lawyers, writing to state officials, and meeting together in small groups. There is a massive level of interest in this issue, and I'd love to see even more of you join in. There are all sorts of opportunities to participate - no matter how much bandwidth you have. For ideas, see (III) below.

One of the biggest areas of exploration in recent weeks has been a group of residents really digging into the public record archives to learn more about how and when various forms and proposals were filed, and how those line up with the Town Meeting votes to establish a Town Center District, and the subsequent writing (and revising) of the by-laws to govern that voted-upon zoning change. Let's just say there is a LOT to dig through, and there are a number of legal inquiries in process. A lot of that advice has been pretty discouraging, I admit. But, I have enough faith in our legal system (!!) to hang on to the hope that there must be a route ahead that would enable the Town to decide for itself what constitutes an appropriate use of a zoning that WE voted for, in the first place. Anyway, this is one topic that I hope will be raised on Monday. Please attend to learn more, or email me and I can connect you with some people working on this aspect of the proposal.

Check out a recent blog post that shows the actual site plans for a [true, multi-use town center](#) - complete with a public Green.

III: Actions

EASY:

1. Online petition to request that the Selectmen (and women!) explore the possibility of [purchasing the Town Center land for municipal means](#). If you were at Town Meeting this May, you may recall that we voted to look for a new home for our Fire department / DPW. Why not by the pond they use to fill their water tanks, right??
2. [Online petition to indicate your support](#) (or lack thereof) for the existing proposal. You can just add your name and address, or optionally include a note to the Planning Board - its the easiest 'letter writing campaign' I can imagine. We already have ~250 'votes' to deny the application, and 43 digital letters to share (you can choose to remain anonymous, too)!
3. Drive past the proposed roadway location, to see for yourself where the driveway for 200+ senior citizens will connect with 111/Mass Ave. The orange stake you see in front of the [Blue House at 800 Mass Ave](#) will be the eastern edge of a 30 foot / 2 lane road entry... IF the MassDOT approves it, after studying [whether the curve and hill allow for adequate site lines / stopping distances](#). I shudder, every time I pass that spot, truth be told.

MID-Range:

1. We have permission to canvass for more Petition signatures at the Transfer Station this Saturday. We have a few volunteers already, but could use 3-4 more. It is actually a fun way to chat with neighbors! Please let me know if you'd like a 'shift' - even just an hour of your time would be a big help. Kids welcome, too!
2. Share your views in a blog post. I've been having trouble keeping up with this outreach effort and all my 'day job' work this month. Would you be open to writing up your impressions of the Public Hearing(s), or thoughts on a particular issue that is important to you? If you'd rather just compose a letter to the Planning Board itself and share a copy of your text, that would be helpful, too.

ABOVE and Beyond:

1. Ever wondered about the nearby Toll Brothers' communities that Dave Ballard keeps raving about? I'd love to hear what actual residents have to say about their homes. Would you like to go interview someone, and circle back with folks here? Similarly, I'd love to hear more from residents who live in former Fenton & Jeanson properties - Boxborough Meadows / Summerfields. What can you share about your property, and any historical notes about how you came to live there?
2. Data mining. We have LOADS of files from the Public Record to look through. Want to do some historical reading?

3. Communications. I have a LOT of letters from the online survey that I need to export into a format that is share-able with the Planning Board, and I need to do that by Monday, in case they close the Public Hearing. I would love an extra set of hands (or typing fingers).

4. Legal explorations. Ever wondered about the history of by-law zoning, on the local, state, or federal level? Well, now's your chance to join a group of us working to become informed. Lawyers have great perspectives, but their time is VERY expensive. We're trying to do some legwork before we bite the bullet and try crowdsourcing funds for legal fees, hoping to minimize the number of hours to be billed. Let me know if you'd like to help. And *especially* if you know a land-use lawyer who might donate some time / reduce fees for a small municipal project.

5. Pilot Community Center. While I've been waylaid a bit by the recent legal / zoning explorations, I'm still excited to try to get a pilot Community Cafe / drop in location off the ground. I do have a location offer that I think we can afford for at least a 6 month trial period, but to make that happen, I still need to research details as to the paperwork required to become a non-profit and/or a co-op, not to mention some searching for grant funding. There are a bunch of people in town with expertise in these areas, but I just haven't had time to explore their advice. A small group could really bring this to the goal line, I think - if you are passionate about building a resource like this, please step up to help bring it to life!

I have lots more things, but not enough time to cover them all, so I'll leave the list there, for now.

One last time - please come to the meeting on Monday. Feel free to share this newsletter, and also let me know if you prefer to be removed. I'm doing my best not to spam people, but the list has grown a LOT this month, so if I missed updating your address, I apologize.

Yours in community building,
Heather