

Dear Chair Schwartz,

I have concerns about the proposed development at 499 Winchester Street coming before the Land Use Committee on Tuesday April 2nd. This large parcel includes an 1860 farmhouse on an isolated acre of property sandwiched between the Charles River golf course and Nahanton Park. I am worried that the intensity of this development, which includes four single family attached dwellings with three stories, could result in negative impacts on wildlife habitat and interfere with the quiet enjoyment of the park.

As you may know, Nahanton Park is one of our larger open spaces and is relatively remote and offers a tranquility hard to find anywhere else. The Park is unique in that it features a wide variety of habitats, including riparian woodlands, river frontage and open meadow. It is one of the few locations in the City where you will find Woodcocks performing their sky dancing display at dusk (at this very time of year.) I visit the park regularly and also co-lead a Newton Conservators/Friends of Nahanton Park sponsored bird walk every year. Bird sightings at the park include a diversity of species hard to find in Newton including, orchard orioles, bobolinks (a declining grassland species) bluebirds, rose breasted grosbeaks, swallows, gnatcatchers and many species of wood warblers.

As climate impacts loom and we become a more urban suburb, it becomes more important than ever to preserve and protect open space and maintain healthy, resilient ecosystems which will be more resistant to the stresses of a changing climate and will be better able to protect us against heat and flooding. This is an important recommendation within the recently completed **Climate Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation and Resiliency Action Plan**.

In addition, the **City's Open Space and Recreation Plan** places emphasis on, *facilitating the assembly of wildlife habitat areas of sufficient dimension to enable survival of species that are threatened by the encroachment of development*. This includes, *Parcels that are contiguous with existing conservation lands should be considered for elevated priority. The value of biodiversity and protection of native species is hereby again explicitly acknowledged as an important component of planning for open space preservation within our community*.

I hope that we can work together through the special permit process to ensure that our commitment to our parks, open spaces, and quality of life for our citizens is part of the discussion as we consider the proposal before us on Tuesday night.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards,

Alison Leary
City Councilor at Large, Ward 1