

Date: February 26, 2024

To: Our Planning Board Colleagues

From: Ephraim Flint and Lynn DeLisi

We are deeply concerned about the growing lack of consensus among residents in our small Town of Lincoln concerning the rezoning proposed for the 3A districts and the village center designed to meet the requirements of the Housing Choice Act (HCA). In addition, we are distressed that many residents feel we are not truly listening to and addressing their feedback. They want us to take more time to carefully consider the options before us and to find a way to find a compromise that all can be comfortable with.

There is agreement within the community that we should comply with the HCA, that Lincoln needs more and different housing, and that the commercial activity in the village center must be maintained and flourish going forward. There is also agreement that we all want to maintain the character of the town while we do this. There is, however, little agreement on how the rezoning should be done. In addition, a number of people, although not all, who voted for the proposed Option C have spoken out to us to say that they would have voted differently had they better understood the options and their consequences in more detail. People who developed the alternative Option E felt they were not given an opportunity to present it at Town Meeting. A central theme we notice is a focus on the unique value of our mall and that having it within the HCA-compliant area, may limit our ability to partner with the RLF as a town to make it a truly vibrant and interesting center. We need to take time to carefully consider this area in more detail and to better understand what is needed to accomplish our town's vision.

There are many issues that concern residents with no agreement on any of them. We have not had time to address them with residents who have opposing views. Although we, the Planning Board, have participated in some intense and difficult work since the beginning of last summer, and have attempted to hear input from residents, still a significantly large group of them feel we need to slow down and take on a leadership role to carefully create a consensus for new bylaw changes with clear resident input. They have voiced to us that there is a pressure to get this done fast when the deadline is not until December 2024. There is more time to slow the process if we chose to take advantage of it. Additionally, we do not believe that the vote at the December Special Town Meeting should be taken as a legal act that we must strictly abide by, but it is input for carefully crafting new zoning around the station. We must be consistently listening to the voices of residents and using our judgement for what is best for Lincoln.

We propose the following choices for a way forward:

1. A two-stage procedure as follows:
 - For Stage 1, we amend our bylaw draft to take out the mall area and request a yes/no vote March 23 on the rest of the changes after refining some of the details.
 - For Stage 2, we reach out to residents who did and did not support Option C and create a committee of 10-12 individuals, equal in opposing views, to work with

the Planning Board to come to a compromise solution for parcels to be zoned that would, in addition to what already has been passed, allow us to be compliant with the HCA.

- Parallel to this, rezoning of the mall would be considered as well, but would not necessarily be part of the HCA compliance.
 - The aim would be to reach consensus on the two additional areas to rezone.
2. Alternatively, we could pass over the warrant at Town Meeting on March 23 entirely, with a statement made that we need more time to bring people together to discuss a compromise solution that most residents of the town can agree on. This too could be done by forming a new subcommittee of the Planning Board to help obtain consensus between opposing views.
 3. If you, our fellow Planning Board members, do not agree to some version of the above, then we request that it be formally stated at Town Meeting when the Bylaw is presented to the Town for a vote, that “two of the five Planning Board members were opposed to bringing this entire package to a vote at this time.”