

Dear Planning Board Members,

Many questions and concerns have been brought to your attention regarding the Overdale project that the Select Board also faced when voting to move forward in accepting the gift of this land. I am not writing this letter to share my personal opinion or support. I am writing this letter to detail my favorable vote on the Overdale development detailing the fact gathering during this six-month deliberation by the Select Board.

I know how hard it is to get hung-up on the trying to do what's best for a particular set of residents when the independent engineers, lawyers and other residents in town aren't fully aligned with those residents. Without providing my personal view on the Plain Street project, I congratulate this board for such a vote taken earlier this year. Although unpopular by many impacted residents, the peer review by Graves Engineering and independent peer reviewer of their report, the lawyers, and other residents guided you to your final decision that will provide tax benefits and site clean-up activities that will benefit Hopedale in the long-term.

After spending over 32 years as an elected/appointed official of Hopedale, although criticized recently by some, I have always taken pride in my approach of every vote I have taken during those years.

My approach in this order was to:

- 1) Gathered the information, understand the facts pertaining to the vote
- 2) Never assumed anything, make sure all comments are fact-based
- 3) Rely on independent experts when needed
- 4) Listen to all residents and how my actions will impact the entire town
- 5) Finally, the most important: where residents, independent experts and the legal system collided, side with the independent experts.

Considering the Overdale project, I shared many of the same concerns this board is facing now and conflicting information that just didn't line up. Questions such as: Is it Parklands, is it Chapter 97, is it a public or private road. I also heard from many residents from the area of a prior lawsuit, and a 1985 town meeting vote asking the Select Board to accept the gifted improvements to the town owned, but private road by the developers.

Not being experts, we asked our town administrator to get all town meeting votes, any Parks, Selectboard, Road Commission and Planning Board meeting minutes to support this one way or another. We requested town counsel to review all court filing & judgments on this particular vote in 1985 and the ruling on the lawsuit back in the early 2000's.

After, six-months of research, prior and present town officials' public discussions, it was determined that that the land was not Chapter 97, it was not Parkland property and the town meeting vote taken in 1985 was never overturned by the town or the courts. With additional discussions, several improvements were added including but limited to:

- 1) Provide access and parking to the Parklands
- 2) Road improvements with a cul-de-sac turn around
- 3) Buffer-zone that would protect any future access to land abutting this property
- 4) Road improvements
- 5) Open Space Land

These above allowances by the developers cannot be denied to be a major benefit for the entire town of Hopedale and it allows for access/parking to the North/West entry to the Parklands, while protecting any future development to the lands that abuts this property. It was also viewed as the least disruptive option to the residents of Overdale versus other possible intrusive alternatives.

In conclusion I go back my original five-steps in considering any vote and with all the facts and input from residents, and legal experts it was concluded this project will benefit the entire town of Hopedale while protecting the residents of Overdale from any future development beyond these 10 homes and giving all residents access to the jewel of Hopedale.

Lou Arcudi

October 21, 2022