

Question Report

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Topic
2072 Mass Ave Community Meeting
Question Details
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Webinar ID	11/29/2020 20:29	Actual Start Time	# Question
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Question	Asker Name	Answer(s)	
1 What's the current zoning, where relevant? Especially interested in the height limits, if any, at Mass. Ave.	Dale Evans	The recently enacted Affordable Housing Overlay would permit 70'	
2 Could you explain the order of precedence for this project? Basically, we have the base Zoning Ordinance. On top of that there the Mass Ave Overlay. Now there is 100% Affordable Housing Overlay Amendment. Where does Comprehensive	Young Kim	A comprehensive permit, also known as MGL Chapter 40B, provides an another option than those under Chapter 40A (base zoning, overlay, and AHO) to permit affordable housing such as our proposal.	
3 What happens if you don't get the funding in the upcoming "funding cycle"?	Dale Evans	We will need to wait another year to apply in the January 2022 state funding round. I need to amend this answer slightly, the state in recent years has a "mini" round for developments that are highly ready to proceed that were not approved in the January funding round. That round would typically be in October 2021.	
4 If AHO would allow 70 feet, why have you chosen to go for eight - and via the 40B Comprehensive Permit - or now even nine stories, when seven would be "as of right," evidently, and seem a better fit for this context?	Dale Evans	The AHO is one tool to permit the project, not necessarily a mandated, prescribed permitting pathway. Given the site's location on Mass Ave, .3 miles from Porter Sq (transit, amenities, scale of Mass Ave being 4 lanes), as well as other tall	
5 Going from 8 stories to 9 stories seems like a step backwards than forward. I appreciate it that you're looking to keep the number of available units, but it might make sense to cut down on units or make them smaller to avoid having 9 stories. The different highs don't make any difference. How come you can't cut down on the units to make the size of the building	Oil A	We are reducing the rear of the building to 6 stories so that it steps back to the community, and increasing the height on Mass Ave where there are numerous taller buildings.	
6 What have been the comments of residents of the Russell Apartments? How are you planning to address them?	Dale Evans	From the FAQ's on our website: The development team has twice met with the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA), the owner and property manager of Russell House, to present the proposal and recent modifications and solicit feedback. The development team, in conjunction with CHA property management, have displayed renderings and other project information in the Russell House lobby along	
7 I really like the bicycle parking accommodations! Can you describe what the entrance and exit movements are like in terms of ramps or elevators?	Mark Boswell	Thanks! I believe there is an existing bike lane on Mass Ave. The bike room is accessed by the elevator (or stairs but an elevator would be preferable). No turns are required to get from the elevator into the bike room or from the building entrance into the elevator.	
Additionally the 2020 Cycling Safety Ordinance Amendment calls for separated bike lanes on Mass Ave. How is that incorporated into your design for curb usage on Mass Ave?			
8 I agree; I feel that 9 stories is overly tall/oppressive on the Mass Ave side.	Lisa McManus	Thank you for your feedback.	
9 So, your application is to go beyond what would be allowed by the least restrictive ordinance, the AHO Amendment, right?	Young Kim	Correct. The AHO is one tool to permit affordable housing, not the only tool to do so.	
10 Can you elaborate at some point about moving, and the nature of, the relocated bus shelter?	Dale Evans	The bus shelter along Mass Ave will be moved slightly forward (it is currently located on our property), otherwise it will be	
11 Which rooftop will be accessible to residents? How much rooftop will be available to them? Where are the solar panels: on the same roof where the residents have access?	Michael Kennedy	The rear 6th floor rooftop. Solar panels on 9th floor so no shadows will impede the array.	
12 Your website notes that this is going to include "transit-oriented housing". How do you define that?	Oil A	Great question, from our BZA application: The Porter Square MBTA Redline and Commuter Rail stations are less than 0.3 miles from the Site and the Davis Square MBTA Redline is located 0.5 miles from the Site. In addition, the #77 and #83 MBTA bus routes are at the Site, the nearest	
13 Hi Jason,	Susan Frankle	The Site is located within walking distance to the Porter Square Shopping Center, which provides several key family-friendly amenities including a grocery store, pharmacy, hardware store and various other community-serving businesses.	
How can you make the statement that this development will reduce traffic in and out of the site, when a traffic study has not been done? What data are you basing that comment on? Thank you.			
14 You are talking about wider traffic lanes like it's a good thing. But for people who are not in cars, widens lanes typically imply faster motor vehicle traffic. Wider lanes also means longer cross time and distance for peds. Can you talk about how the pedestrian experience is degraded so that cars can move more quickly?	Mark Boswell		
15 It would be interesting to see the outcome of a full context analysis on this project - including impact on the residential Walden Street and its residents. Walden Street is a very different environment from that of Massachusetts Avenue.	Merry White		
16 think about making the ground floor retail into an evening teen or adult hang out area and the amenity room into a smaller kid's indoor gym/playground?	Ruth Ryals		
17 the pictures showed trees at ground level, where would they go??	Hugh McManus		
18 Thank you for giving up your lot to widen the traffic lanes. But the road is too narrow to add bike lanes. How are bicyclists to leave their residence onto bicycle lanes on Mass Ave? And how about going west on Walden St?	Young Kim		
19 Have you looked at how many units (of which size) you might have to forego were you to limit the height at Mass Ave to seven stories? Unless we want towers everywhere (some do, I gather), this might be a useful adjustment.	Dale Evans		
20 Have you discussed moving the bus stop with MBTA?	Young Kim		
21 Try to take control of the bus stop, so it isn't one of those illuminated advertisements with tiny metal "seat" and openings for rain and weather. You could commission a nice design or art.	Dale Evans		
22 Perspective from Porter?? Go back to that?	Dale Evans		
23 The rendering of the side-view shows bicyclists in the street. There is no bike lane there, presently. Is that to imply that Walden street is safe to bicycle on— once the street is widened? There is no room to bike on Walden street right now.	Michael Kennedy		
24 The view of the building from deeper into North Cambridge looking down to the building makes the building the one and only one that stands out, uncharacteristically high in relation to the rest of the neighborhood. Is this design in keeping with the rest of the neighborhood?	Michael Kennedy		
25 Please be sure to go back to perspective from Porter.	Dale Evans		
26 with the image of Walden st 3 lane traffic, what is the building proposed on the right over the restaurant?	marilee meyer		
27 I live at 5 Walden Street so I'm a direct abutter. I'm concerned about traffic, safety and the shadow effect. Our building gets enveloped by several hours of shadows every season. I would like to see the shadow renderings of a building of way less height (several floors less). I support affordable housing but this feels too big for our neighborhood.	Inger Kwaku		
28 how tall are the unit ceilings?	marilee meyer	9 to 9.5 feet	
29 some of the views showed 8 stories, not the 9 of the current design	Hugh McManus		
30 Won't residents need more than three cars?	Dale Evans		
31 Is your building really free-standing and how large is the pass through on the 2050 side?	marilee meyer		
32 I'm concerned that this building would create precedence for buildings of similar height or more in the adjacent lots in the future. How come you can't down on the units so that the building is not as tall?	Oil A		
33 To clarify my safety comment, I'm concerned about the increased traffic (cars and pedestrians) and the impact that has on	Inger Kwaku		
34 Patrick Baxter is the traffic engineer...?	Michael Kennedy		
35 on the terrace floor slide, there is a 3 bedroom unit which doesn't seem to have a kitchen/ livingroom. are there any	marilee meyer		

36 I believe your application requests 18 waivers for zoning, many of which are for safety issues. This is worrisome to those of us who live in the neighborhood and cross that intersection many times per day. Can you summarize the safety issues that you are requesting waivers for? Thank you. Susan Frankle

37 Question/comment on parking study - in addition to its multiple weaknesses, it was done in isolation - but there are 83 units of new housing coming on line right now within 3 blocks of your proposal - surely this is relevant?? Hugh McManus

38 are you accommodating any drop-off on Mass Ave? you know it will happen... marilee meyer

39 Why do you think you only need parking for 25 cars with such a high percentage of family units? That is well under what is Jean Hermann

40 How many participants tonight? Dale Evans

41 To have mature trees on the roof terrace, you would need substantially deep soil base. Has this been factored in? Young Kim

42 Disappointed that the sidewalks will be only 7'2" - thats only a little wider than the entirely inadequate sidewalks there now, and does NOT include the skirt on the restaraunt that can currently be used for passing other peds Hugh McManus

43 The Affordable Housing Overlay provides extensive guidance on building design including appropriate building height and size. Your current proposal significantly exceeds these guidelines. Why did you decide to disregard AHO guidelines on building Lisa Dreier

44 My first time at one of these presentations, I'm a homeowner on King Street off Walden. I'm really excited about this project, and really appreciate the level of ambition for adding this much affordable housing in our neighborhood. My question is: Has Nathaniel Smith
there been any prediction of how much traffic the ingress/egress into the garage area will add to Walden, and if there have been any ideas for how to help manage that traffic. Cars have an extremely hard time turning into the Darul Kabab lot, and I have to assume this will create more cars. Has it been considered running egress/ingress through the city parking lot, to cut down on the number of driveways onto Walden at that point?

45 The best way to mitigate traffic is to have a smaller building. Aiming for a smaller site seems reasonable given our residential street (Walden). Can you distribute the affordable housing need across multiple locations? Inger Kwaku

46 Please stay close to mic! Dale Evans

47 Some of the comments suggest reducing the size of the building. These comments seem to miss the fact that this building is intended to be affordable, low-cost housing, for residents who cannot afford the high rents in Cambridge. Can you elaborate on the connection between the size of the building (49 units) and the affordability of the housing? Thank you. James Zall

48 The existing 8 story building you hold up as a comparable, sits on a much larger lot. There is a lot of space around the whole building, it is even set back from the sidewalk. It does not loom Jean Hermann

49 How will the entering and exiting of cars, pedestrians, and bicyclists on both Walden and Mass Ave affect traffic flow? What study has been conducted to determine safety here with not only more residents but more people moving through and across the spaces of Mass Ave, the building, and Walden Street. Michael Kennedy

50 no, rear view Hugh McManus

51 I'm glad that affordable housing will be built near so many public transit options, so that we have fewer cars on the roads altogether. I also park on Cogswell/Mead and was relieved that the parking studies showed almost no impact on my ability to Amy Sloper

52 Is there any way that the building can accommodate some parking for those 25 cars? Your parking study is unrealistic and does not factor in other developments coming online in the coming months. It also includes a street that doesn't exist (King Street). The people in your building will be struggling to park in the neighborhood. Lisa McManus

53 Hello is there laundry hook ups in the apartments? Ruth Kerby yes.

54 Please talk about the "overhang" in the context of showing the view from Porter. Dale Evans

55 Can you fix the rendering that is from the perspective of 5 Walden Street? It shows wide expanse which is not accurate. This was requested at the first Community Meeting. Thank you. Susan Frankle

56 Thank you for your response. By "context" is meant a broader representation of many concerns from Walden neighbors, most of which focus on safety and the height (I don't think the step down on the Walden side really makes a difference on the impact on the scale of the whole building, whether on Mass. Ave or from Walden). Also, I have to wonder whether saying "this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity" really is persuasive. Thank you. Merry White

57 Was that nine? Dale Evans

58 As a direct abutter (5 Walden St) I have been at one of the smaller meetings and the potential zoning violations were never mentioned. Could you please tell us how many waivers you are seeking and what the waivers are for. Inger Kwaku

59 * sorry above I meant, King Street is not a public street for parking as I understand it. And it doesn't go through to Creighton Lisa McManus

60 What properties are actually abutters. Two of your property lines about city properties. Jean Hermann

61 A comment: I strongly support this thoughtfully designed project. Good luck with the permitting process. Mark Boswell

62 Have you spoken to the fire department located on Mass Ave and if so what is their perspective on the increase of road Ezekial Bowman

63 It's worth noting that the 8 story building you mention on Mass Ave has a much larger lot (possibly 3 to 4 times the size of the lot at Darul Kabab) and has a big set back, tons of parking, and large green space / garden. It would be good to mention that if you are using it as a comparison. Susan Frankle

64 Why not have Lesley Art and Design manage a changing art show there? Ruth Ryals

65 Harvard have paid for better ones in Harvard Square. Dale Evans

66 Following up on the bicyclist issue, will they use the resident's entrance of have their own separate entrance. You are expecting to have a large number of bicycles. Young Kim the residential entrance has been designed to be wider than normal so it can accomodate bikes.

67 Please contact the Cambridge Arts Council regarding the proposed art piece behind the bus stop. Thank you. Cathleen McCormick

68 Is there going to be a community room? Ruth Kerby

69 Is there another site more suitable for a project of this scale? Seems there are so many untenable safety issues; likewise, the developers need an inordinate number of zoning waivers, which defeats the purpose of zoning rules, which is to ensure that the neighborhood remains safe for everyone. Michael Kennedy

70 I would like to see a broader overhang on the street. marilee meyer

71 the facade is still a bit severe. marilee meyer

72 Do you have building sections that include the property lines so it is clear where the building sits on the property. Jean Hermann

73 To safely ride on Walden you need to be on the sidewalk Hugh McManus

74 what is the facade material? cement board? matte and textured or having a sheen? marilee meyer

75 not so good for peds particularly with a 7' sidewalk Hugh McManus

76 Don't limit potential art outreach to just Arts Council, please! Dale Evans

77 These bikers are in the middle of Walden Street... Michael Kennedy

78 Have you talked about "overhang" look from Porter yet? Having trouble hearing some of this. Dale Evans

79 Lisa Dreier (You): The Affordable Housing Overlay provides guidance on appropriate building height and size. Why did you decide to depart from AHO guidelines on building size? Lisa Dreier

80 I still dont understand the right building rendering on the 3 lanes. you said it was part of something else? marilee meyer

81 How many on-street parking spaces are you calculating are available to accommodate the excess above the three (plus one?) you are providing in the building?	Dale Evans	
82 Ok-thanks for answering my question. I will be contacting you for alternate shadow drawings (for a building that is not as tall).	Inger Kwaku	
83 but where is the height coming from on the right opposite 2072?	marilee meyer	
84 The parking at this time, since last spring, has greatly diminished.	Jean Hermann	
85 What have been the comments of residents of Russell Apts?	Dale Evans	
86 To some extent, we have to think about what the neighborhood will be like in the future, not just now. On Mass Ave, it will not stay at the smaller scale it is now as buildings sell and get redeveloped.	Ruth Ryals	
87 The rendering I was referring to was not this one. It was from within the neighborhood, farther north and looking down toward Porter Square...not down Mass Ave	Michael Kennedy	
88 is the tower white? did you consider breaking up the mass with color change?	marilee meyer	the tower is white or light grey. The portions next to the tower on both sides are warmer, darker grey. There are wood tones
89 Why can't you meet the zoning code parameters? You would be setting a precedent that much considered, much discussed zoning codes can be ignored.	Jean Hermann	
90 @ Ruth Ryals: the zoning board, I believe, has already addressed scale in its ordinances, so that the future development will not overrun or change the character of present neighborhood(s)	Michael Kennedy	
91 are there two bathrooms?	marilee meyer	1 br have 1 bath 2 br have 1 bath 3 br have 1.5 bath yes they do!
92 Do the windows open? Sorry if you already answered this.	Merry White	
93 The notice of public hearing letter mentions "violations". Please explain.	Inger Kwaku	
94 Keep losing zoom. How many participants?	Dale Evans	38 attendees and 6 panelists
95 Beech st church development	marilee meyer	
96 I live a few houses behind on Walden and am concerned about this huge, severe looking building that looks like an office building not a family apartment building. The apartments are so small. Where will the children play- on the roof? Where will people park their cars- there's no spaces available nearby for such a scale. Please modify to fit the scale of space.	Marisa O'Boyle	
97 Please send out Q&A?	Dale Evans	
98 2 three family rehabs on Creighton, one two family on Porter Road, no parking; 20-30 Porter Apt. building, 26 units, rehab of formally unoccupied building, no parking, St. James place, 46 units, 1 parking spot per, new, End of Creighton, 3 units new	Hugh McManus	
99 All are under construction now	Hugh McManus	
100 By the time you start building your parking study will not be relevant	Hugh McManus	
101 Comments of residents of Russell??	Dale Evans	
102 How many total participants were there? Some have dropped off already.	Inger Kwaku	
103 Have you considered moving the drop off spaces to Mass Ave? Having them enter / exit at the back of the building onto Walden is problematic during commuting hours, especially those cars coming off of Mass Ave and trying to turn left into the	Susan Frankle	
104 what about those people who work night shift in burlington or wilmington? that is why parking is still relevant	marilee meyer	
105 Lower-income residents drive for Uber/Lyft... Part of your calculations?	Dale Evans	
106 What other tool are you referring to? in the spirit of transparency we in the neighborhood are trying to understand. Which "different bucket?" Thank you for your sincere answer.	Michael Kennedy	
107 that is why the AHO is such a problem. No REVIEW! I appreciate the opportunity to see what you are doing.	marilee meyer	
108 But you'd be limited to seven stories.	Dale Evans	
109 Which code does your building meet? Who have you been talking to? Which members of the community?	Jean Hermann	
110 Have you considered placing the garage entry / access on Mass Ave rather than Walden?	Lisa Dreier	
111 For people who are questioning why this (and almost any) affordable housing doesn't meet current zoning requirements, it should be noted (1) that about 60% of all residential units now in Cambridge (not just affordable) are in units that don't meet current zoning, and (2) much of our existing zoning code *intentionally* restricts housing in general and affordable housing in particular. For more details on that second point, I would recommend the book, "The Color of Law" by Richard Rothstein.	James Zall	
112 We support affordable housing and have other city affordable housing on Walden St that looks like housing, is on a lower scale and fits into the neighborhood. The apartments are small. Population density can have a negative impact on these families. There are other examples of affordable housing units that did not work from that perspective and needed to be torn down. If this is affordable housing, what are the rents?	Marisa O'Boyle	
113 Thanks so much for addressing my question! To reiterate—I am really excited about this project, and impressed with the amount of work you're all putting into the details. Thank you.	Nathaniel Smith	
114 Have you addressed question about concerns of Russell residents?	Dale Evans	
115 I might have misunderstood but it sounded like you said that when you bought this property and started the project the AHO was not in place and that now that it is, the project wouldn't meet the requirements and because of that you're using other tools. Is that the case?	Oli A	
What I'm hearing is that you found a loophole to go around for what has been voted as regards to affordable housing. Covid will eventually end in a year or two, the building will be there forever.		
I understand that as developers you'd like the build the largest building possible, but you have to appreciate that the people		
116 The 8 story building is set back from the street. The design of that building is not the issue, the space around the building mitigates the size of the building. It is a residential building, again no one is extolling the desi*n.	Jean Hermann	
117 FYI Russell has never been called Russell House. Not sure how it came to be called this	Margaret Rueter	
118 What are there concerns??	Dale Evans	
119 To those who continue to ask about the waivers being requested, they are listed on pgs 49-52 of the application. https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/inspectionalservicesdepartment/bzadocuments/2072massavebza0173262020documents.pdf	Larry Field	
120 Is 12pm noon or midnight?	Jean Hermann	the shadow study depicts 12 noon
121 How much further does it stick out beyond Russell?	Dale Evans	
122 Elm street is in Somerville and perhaps that wasn't to be in the study. But the study was not correct on Elm St or Beech Strret. there's never a place to park. think yu need to do another study.	Phyllis Pownall	
123 Affordable housing developers in Cambridge, often with the strong support of the city's housing trust and planning department, have long used Chapter 40B as the primary tool for permitting developments. The Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) was proposed in 2019 as an alternative to using Chapter 40B. So, it isn't that these developers are using a new loophole but they started planning this project before the AHO, using the permitting tool others have long used.	Larry Field	

124 Outreach to Russell must be to residents, not just management (they can help, when they choose to.) Didn't hear you say what	Dale Evans
125 Yes, "safety" is one of the few criteria that is relevant to granting a Comp Permit.	Dale Evans
126 People want to know what waivers are being requested? Just answer the question in a straight forward manner please	Jean Hermann
127 I look forward to doing all I can to support this development. I have tried, and I honestly cannot understand many of my neighbors' concerns about "safety" and the aesthetics of the building here and in other forums. To me, the most important issue at hand is affordable housing for everyone in our city. Perhaps many of us cannot imagine what it is like to not be able to afford a place to live that is a reasonable distance to our workplace and public transit, but I am asking us to try.	Amy Sloper
128 I suspect that people who violate your drop off spot rules will naturally shift to using the city permit lot which will not be monitored by sensors or be enforced as well as your spots, taking away spots for actual permit holders. Has this been taken	Dan C
129 Consider reaching out to Lesley U to have education students available to tutor children of residents, for credit!	Ruth Ryals
130 Like many architects, Bruner cott selects colors that are too similar in color and value.	Jean Hermann
131 There is much to like about your plan. However, I could only support it were it not nine stories in this portion of Mass Ave. which is residential enough to justify a more modest height. You could get seven with the AHO as of right. I would support you here were you to agree to something like that. I remain to be convinced regarding significant height at this location. (Have you looked at a more slender building of nine [or possibly greater] stories?)	Dale Evans
132 Are you willing to RE-consider putting garage entry on mass Ave?	Lisa Dreier
133 I have had great difficulty hearing you all and was getting bounced off repeatedly for a period earlier. I hope I've got your answers. I appreciate the extensive responses if I don't always agree that this is exactly where we ought to be going at this	Dale Evans
134 Will you sell the building anytime soon? Who will manage it (as long as you own)? (I've heard some complaints about management at another of your buildings.)	Dale Evans
135 Can't hear Sean!	Dale Evans
136 Closer to mic, please!	Dale Evans
137 How about offering to share rear roof deck with residents of Russell?	Dale Evans
138 I appreciate the design change and your transparency in answering questions and support affordable housing. A building of this scale is still problematic to me. I will be in touch regarding specifics about shadow renderings as a function of height since 5 Walden Street is considerably effectd by this issue.	Inger Kwaku
139 This is an affordable rent situation more than it is affordable housing: if we are all on the same page here about wanting affordable housing, why not sell these units to encourage home ownership as well as encouraging pride in the neighborhood? There are studies that show that home ownership leads to great self advocacy and self agency in general.	Michael Kennedy
140 Is Trinity JohnDiGiovanni's company?	Dale Evans
141 A last question from myself: "Resident Preference" in Cambridge means what exactly. Just one year, correct? Homeless Cantabrigian in Brighton	Dale Evans
142 not eligible...	Dale Evans
143 Thank you for the work you are doing to bring much-needed affordable housing to Cambridge.	James Zall
144 With all due respect, I do not feel respected. There was more discrediting and deflecting than answering.	Michael Kennedy
145 Please make the Q&A available. Thanks.	Susan Frankle
146 Mostly good. Hope we can make even better.	Dale Evans