

28-44 Broadway, Neighborhood Meeting
May 9, 2022
6:30 p.m.

[Meeting Introduction and Presentation]

Q: We have been part of the discussions before. We very much appreciate the effort that is being made to integrate this building into the local environment. One of the major issues that I think concerns us, and perhaps many others in the neighborhood, is the parking garage and traffic flow situation. Would you like to address that?

Ben Rogan: Sure! As far as the parking garage, we've been back and forth with the City over the past few years on the location, entrance to the garage. We've proposed it on Mt. Vernon St., we've proposed it on Broadway, and the only place the City would allow it is on George St. We do intend to provide parking for our commercial tenants, parking for our residential tenants. We're going to have car share service and electric car charging stations. With the number of people that live in the building, the ratio of parking space is much less than what you may see in other developments. So, we don't think it'll be a huge impact on the neighborhood.

Q: Yeah, I guess from Mary's perspective and from mine, there are still concerns about the traffic pattern and the volume of traffic on George St. And then, looping around onto Mt. Vernon. We appreciate you've thought this through. Probably ad nauseum, I would give you. I'm just wondering if there is a still better solution that would involve perhaps co-development of your property across Broadway? There are really not as far as I can tell terrible good alternatives for ramp access and traffic flow on this side of Broadway. I know that Highland is developing the other side of Broadway with an underground garage and I'm wondering if it is possible to take advantage of that, that development opportunity, and to perhaps, add another layer of parking underneath that, to the Broadway Brakes?

Q: And so just to say, we've said this every time, and we keep saying it. It's already really impossible, the traffic on George St., but even before the construction has started. There are often FedEx and Amazon trucks there. It's very difficult for us turning left onto George St. from Broadway, then to try to get to Mt. Vernon Street, it's already extremely difficult, and when there's snow, it's almost impossible. So even before the construction starts, the idea of having more and more cars coming down George St., doesn't make any sense to us, living where we live. And the traffic on Mt. Vernon St. . . . the traffic in front of our house where we live at 17 Mt. Vernon 3 houses from Broadway, is often backed up. And this has been the case for years now. It got better during COVID, but the traffic is backed up the point where there are people honking their horns, trying to get through the intersection at Mt. Vernon and Broadway. The noise is incredible and disturbing, and it often takes us, we're sitting there for 10 minutes to get in and out of our driveway, before the construction starts, and before people are turning on George St. to get to the parking garage.

Jordan Smith: Mary and Martin thank you. I think maybe Ben can answer part of your question about parking in another site across the street. But I think actually, Steve, it would be helpful to discuss, something that they're talking about which is Fedex and Amazon trucks as they pull into

the side streets and how we're going to be addressing that with the pickup and drop off zones here.

Q: And just one more thing, we've heard it floated the idea of Somerville having neighborhood parking stickers like they have in Boston and Cambridge. That would really help. Because people park on our street in front of our house, and they're walking to Sullivan Station and they have Somerville parking permits. We're fortunate to have a very short substandard driveway, so we have a parking space and we only have one car. But our neighbors can't even park, because other people are already parking on the street for the entire day. So, if it's possible to have a neighborhood parking permit for east Somerville, I think that would really help the situation. It would reduce the traffic and reduce the parking pressure.

Jordan Smith: Thank you, so maybe Councilor McLaughlin if you want to respond to that and then we'll go to Stephen and Ben.

Matthew McLaughlin: Yeah, I can comment on that. I live on Mt. Vernon St. as well, so I know exactly what you're talking about. In terms of the regional parking pass, that is something that I have brought up before in the past because of Mt. Vernon St. as well as other streets. East Somerville people have advocated for this. It is something worth discussing and it is something that the traffic commission will ultimately have to vote on. We have gotten them to take some more innovative approaches in recent history, so maybe that is something we can talk about again. In terms of parking in this particular building, I stated this at the Planning Board a couple times now, when we get to the Planning Board again, I really just don't think this project needs parking at all, because we had a lot of developers tell us over the years that they wanted to get rid of parking requirements, parking minimums because they felt that the new community is not going to be driving as much, and people live close to public transit. We're right next to an orange line station and a bus stop here. My solution would be to just not have parking at all, and maybe have a few more units as a result of that. That would eliminate any traffic issues there. So, I'm going to advocate for that at the Planning Board again, but ultimately it is their decision. I do think that is a reasonable solution and one that other developers have been voluntarily doing in this community.

Ben Rogan: I know you've brought this up before, but I'm going to live in this building, I need a car; I drive every day. I'm probably going to have my offices in the building. We're a construction management company so we're driving to sites, every day. It's just not practical for us to not have parking for my business. But I understand really the only way you can solve any contribution by this building toward the already congested neighborhood would be to eliminate parking altogether but that just doesn't make sense to me. If you're taking a left onto Mt. Vernon from Lincoln, I understand part of the problem is whoever lives on that corner, they have a huge bush, right in their front yard. It just blocks visibility, maybe something can be done to convince them to remove those bushes, maybe it's just a tough situation. Steve you can speak to the amount of trips we will generate. I think the majority of people in this building will be taking the Orange Line to work; they'll use cars mainly for weekend outings and things like that, but businesses like myself who are operating out the building will use cars during the day, and most of the deliveries will happen on Broadway and will not circulate into the neighborhood. And obviously we'll be extremely careful during the construction period, not allow construction

vehicles through the neighborhood. But Steve maybe you could speak specifically, we've done analysis on the traffic impact to the neighborhood.

Stephen Siragusa: Yeah, absolutely. We work especially with the mobility department with the City. So, we put together three I believe traffic studies, so three separate ones. We put together a mobility management one which I think is really the most important one here. And a lot of that outlines the commitment that Ben and his team will have to try to reduce the number of vehicles to and from the site, whether that's subsidized MBTA passes for residents, subsidized blue bike passes for residents, so obviously Ben spoke a little bit to the need for parking so I won't get into that, but his team has done a really good job in committing to making sure that as few vehicle trips are coming to and from the site as possible. Another thing that is required from this mobility management plan is I believe it's every two years, Ben and his team have to take data collection at the site. There're thresholds that they need to meet for the number of vehicles or percentage of trips to and from the site. It starts at 50% and as time goes on over the next 10 years, it has to reduce all the way down to I believe 35% or somewhere in that area of total trips to and from the site being by motor vehicle. And if they don't meet that threshold then the mobility department will work with Ben and his team to further reinvest or reallocate certain funds or whatever it might be to make sure that fewer and fewer vehicle trips are coming to and from the site. And on top of that, and I don't know if we have a graphic available, I know we put one together, but we're going to propose adding another loading space along Broadway, along the site, so there is one currently, and I apologize if I don't have my orientation, I believe it's the east side that there's already one currently, where that blue vehicle is, and we're going to propose to close all the curb cuts along Broadway and add a second loading space where that green vehicle is. For your Amazon deliveries, food deliveries, Uber, Lyfts, things like that. So, there will be fewer vehicles turning down George St. then Lincoln then Mt. Vernon. So again, that's something we'll have to go through, I believe the traffic commission will approve that plan, but just another thing that Ben is trying to commit to really reduce the number of vehicles that are coming off of Broadway and coming through the neighborhood.

Q: It's my second community meeting for this project. I think myself and my neighbors have made our voices abundantly clear about what the actual impact of traffic and parking is going to be. I'd like to thank Representative McLaughlin for his proposal to eliminate the parking because I think that would make all of us very happy. George St. currently has about 31 units within multifamily homes and 12 parking spaces. 26 garage spaces is going to mean that 26 cars will absolutely be turning onto George St. daily. The only outlet is to continue down George St., backing up traffic on a small, one way, parking on one side street, flowing onto Lincoln, another small, one way, one sided street, and ultimately onto Mt. Vernon, which can only mean backed up traffic from Mt. Vernon, onto Lincoln, and onto George. The traffic impact is huge. The light at Mt. Vernon, which most people don't even get across because of the way people block the Broadway intersection, Mt. Vernon is always backed up. Those additional 26 cars coming and going in and out of George St. are going to create a backed-up traffic pattern on George, Lincoln and Mt. Vernon. There is "no ifs ands or buts" about it. There are no amount of studies that can change what happens when 26 vehicles enter and exit a garage located at the top of George St. so the traffic pattern, anyone in this neighborhood, is going to feel those impacts heavily. The elimination of parking at the end of George St. is going to further burden the residents of this neighborhood, who already have a difficult time finding parking. Most of us in this

neighborhood know that when you come in, if you don't have a garage, you're in a three to four block parking area. When it snows, it's impossible. You find yourself sometimes 6 or 8 streets away. The idea that this will not impact the residents' traffic and parking is just absurd. There's no way it won't. And Mr. Rogan, you'll find it when you live here. If in fact you do move into the building, you'll be sitting on George St. in traffic and then on Lincoln, and then on Mt. Vernon. The idea that more loading zones are going to be added on the Broadway side to me just sounds like more eliminated parking spots. Right now, those parking spots are utilized by the neighbors here, when we absolutely can't find parking, and we're forced to and race out to our cars at 8 am and put money in the meters, because those are metered spots. So, to make loading zones at that section of Broadway, is going to eliminate more parking. So again, I applaud Mass McLaughlin's proposal to eliminate parking, I know it's not great for the people of that building, but the impact of 26 vehicles entering George St. and existing George St. daily, multiple times daily, eliminating parking spots on the top of George St. for that access ramp, eliminating parking spots on Broadway for more loading zones, the impact is huge. My only second complaint about the building is the massive size of it. I live on the 3rd floor at 15 George St. My view out my window has always been, and to some people it might not be beautiful, but to me, it's a view of 93, Encore, the Boston skyline, and now I'm going to be faced with looking at a brick wall. My neighbor Mr. Larusso will be looking at a brick wall. His other property will be looking at a brick wall. The smaller scoped project which was originally proposed, we were all very happy about that, but this large building, oversized building, blocking our views, taking up our parking spaces, increasing traffic flow immensely, it's just, I'm totally against it. Mainly for the parking, I guess I'll get use to looking at the back of a brick wall. But the parking and traffic on my street and the surrounding streets is going to be horrific. And again Mr. Rogan please prepare yourself and your employees and your family for, pardon the French, but a shit show.

Q: We already spoke, we really want to thank our neighbor at 15 George St. because we absolutely agree with her and we think she's got the numbers. And it's already impassible. A lot of the time. So, we really thank you Matt McLaughlin. We understand you're all making really good efforts and we appreciate them.

Q: I wish he had built the 42 unit that was approved back in November of 2019 because we wouldn't be here discussing this at length. I think everybody knows my feeling on this. I think it's way too big for the neighborhood. It's 5 feet off my 3-family. My tenants at 7 George St. right now are outraged. They've been there for a long time and they're going to have this monstrosity of a building built right next to the place where they live. So, I have a lot of concerns on this project, in fact, it's in litigation right now because of a piece of property which is still, I think it's my ownership, but that's beside the point. 81 units, 26 parking spots, a ramp built right next to my 3 family is unacceptable. This is totally unacceptable, and I can echo the sentiments of Martin and Mary, Tina, the traffic is a nightmare. The last 10 years the light at the corner hasn't worked right. It backs up onto Mt. Vernon, onto Lincoln, onto George St. The City can't get it right. I don't like it and I hope it never gets built next to my 3 family. It's too big and, like Tina said, 12 parking spots when everything is filled up on George St., we're going to be losing 4 parking spots, at least, from the corner of George to my 3-family at 7 George. Where are all these cars going to go? Where are these people going to park? And then having a ramp right next to my 3-family is unacceptable. This is just not the right development for the neighborhood. This should be built across the street where Broadway Brakes is, not at this corner. So, you know my

feeling and I will fight this tooth and nail, even when it goes back to the Planning Board. and I know there are people on the Board that will not appreciate this project being built at the current site.

Ben Rogan: Thanks for your concern. Just so everyone on the call knows, Elio would actually like to see the scope of this project expanded, he's approached me about buying his property and making this project even larger, so for him to say the things he's said, he's disingenuous. He would like to see even a larger project here, combining his site with it.

Q: Just to add to Mr. Rogan's comments about buying my property. I think we should settle our differences with your trespassing and knocking my property down, my wall down, my shed down, and destruction to my shop. Okay so let's not go there Mr. Rogan.