

Mr. Lowrie Sargent,
Vice-Chair, Camden Planning Board
29 Elm Street, Camden, Maine 04843

Dear Mr. Sargent:

We are writing to you about the Fox Hill Real Estate, LLC. proposal for a zoning change to a residential property [eg. Fox Hill] in Camden so they can lease the property to Mclean Hospital for the operation of a commercial Alcohol and Drug Abuse Center.

The proposed location is in the middle of a premier residential neighborhood that was established in the late 19th century. Owners in the neighborhood have invested in the maintenance and enhancement of the neighborhood since that time. A commercial enterprise would threaten the residential status of the area. Once there is one commercial entity it is not difficult to assume more will follow.

The Town of Camden Zoning Ordinance states that one of its principal goals is "to protect existing neighborhoods." Changing the zoning of Fox Hill would essentially go against one of the stated goals of the Town of Camden and the town would lose a heritage asset- the Bay View Street, Chestnut Street, and surrounding residential streets.

Those Streets are a favorite venue for local residents and visitors who enjoy walking, jogging, cycling, pushing baby strollers, walking dogs etc.. Since Bay View is a twisting, narrow road with noted elevation change as well as a recreational area, the possibility of increased traffic is an extremely sensitive issue and would put all these people in danger.

In addition, the Fox Hill driveway intersects that street at the most precarious blind curve. It seriously impairs the visibility of oncoming traffic for drivers on the road and those exiting the extremely steep Fox Hill driveway.

Fox Hill Real Estate LLC has compared Fox Hill with Mclean Hospital's Fernside facility at 162 Mountain Street in Princeton, MA. We have researched the history of the Fernside property and thought the information we found would be useful to you.

Wilkes Roper added the north and south wings and operated a boarding house for Harvard professors and students. These additions were made in 1870-2. In 1885 F. A. Boyd leased the house and used it as a boarding house. It was during this period that the building was used as a tavern for some time and fell into disrepair.

In 1890 the house was bought by the Working Girls' Club in Boston (the first of its kind formed in 1886). The house was set up by donations from wealthy patrons to enable the working class women the opportunity for a summer vacation away from the city. The house was refurbished and kept in excellent condition for many years and was expertly and lovingly managed by Josephine Allen. The Vacation House received its last guest in 1989. It was purchased by Richard and Jocelyn Morrison, who restored and opened Fernside in 1996 as a bed, breakfast, and conference center. Subsequently it became the McLean mental health and substance abuse center. <http://www.princetonmahistory.org>

Since Fernside was an established commercial entity when McLean acquired the property it is likely that a zoning change was not necessary. Rezoning the Fox Hill property to permit a commercial enterprise in a residential zone is a major issue for the Bay View Street/Chestnut Street neighborhood and the Town of Camden. Furthermore, for comparative purposes, the topographical nature of the two properties is very different. Fernside is situated in close proximity to a straight road, with no blind curves. In the image below no neighborhood driveways are visible. The area appears to be more rural than Bay View Street.

The number of people and services required at the proposed Fox Hill rehabilitation center appears to be undefined. Based on Mr. Rodman's statement 23-27 people would be the staffing number needed to care for the patients. (August 8, 2013 Camden Herald). A quick calculation indicates 46-54 vehicle round trips per day. According to the same article, meals are to be catered by local restaurants. Delivery of two meals a day would indicate a minimum of two to three deliveries per day. There would be more if breakfast is catered. Other ancillary services need to be defined in terms of increased traffic: laundry service, delivery of medical supplies and equipment, registered drug disposal service and facility and state and local inspections. While reviewing the proposed zoning change we believe the Planning Board should seriously consider the anticipated increase in traffic and the requisite implications to public safety.

In addition, we are certain the Planning Board will want to identify and evaluate environmental impact and fire safety issues.

There is also the question regarding the facility's potential patients. Do we know the exact number of patients who will be admitted? Will the patients be similar to the ones accepted by the McLean facility in Princeton MA. [eg. Fernside]? " As a satellite of McLean Hospital, this 10-bed, private-pay program, offers evaluation and individualized services for residents whose substance use disorders may be complicated by co-occurring psychiatric conditions ". www.mcleanfernside.org. Exactly what "co-occurring psychiatric conditions would there be? Can they evaluate what dangers would be involved in a written statement?

There have been contradictory patient supervision Statements:

Dr. Lavendusky's letter to the Town of Camden Planning Board states that "typically clients will not have cars", but he does not rule out that possibility.

Dr. Lavendusky: August 8, 2013 Camden Herald. In addition, while patients will not necessarily be accompanied by a staff member at all times, they will be closely monitored on the grounds, and will be transported and accompanied by staff when they leave the grounds.

At the August 15, 2013 Planning Board Meeting it was stated that the patients could leave the facility without supervision if they decided to quit the program.

We think the proposer (FHRE) and the possible tenant McLean Hospital should define what drugs will be used and what their policies and procedures are for drug regulation and disposal. For instance would there be a registered service and disposal facility used for disposing of expired drugs / syringes ?

For the sake of full disclosure and transparency the Planning Board should require that the names of all Fox Hill LLC partners be made available. We understand that there are 24 or so partners in the group. How many of them have a residence in the Camden area? If so, where? Are they speaking out publicly on behalf of the project without being properly identified as investors?

Fox Hill Real Estate LLC keeps referring to the fact that there would be less impact on the neighborhood than if Matt Simmons had continued to own it. Matt Simmons, after purchasing the property, proposed that it be used as a think tank convention center modeled on the Aspen Institute. Did the Planning Board turn down that proposal because it would have been in violation of the zoning ordinance? In any event Fox Hill remained a residential property. Statements to the contrary are misleading.

If the proposed Fox Hill LLC facility was located in a more logical and appropriate location in the Camden / Rockport/ Rockland area [eg. similar to the Fernside type citing] it would make more sense. This would eliminate the possibility of a the terrible rezoning precedent of permitting a commercial enterprise in a residential area- a precedent that has the potential to change all residential zones in the Town of Camden and permanently change the character of this beautiful town.

We very much appreciate that the Planning Board over the years has exhibited diligence and thoughtfulness for the preservation of Camden neighborhoods and public safety. To that end the Board has fittingly formulated a comprehensive Zoning Ordinance. We strongly recommend that the Board uphold their admirable record and reject the application for the proposed zoning change as submitted by the Fox Hill Real Estate LLC.

Sincerely,

Mr. and Mrs. Peter Blake

Mr. & Mrs. John Phelan

Ms. Carrie Cameron

Mr. & Mrs. Frank Scofield

Mr. & Mrs. Winfield Padgett

Mr. & Mrs. Rupert Scofield

Ms. Debbie Tucker & Mr. Charles Stifter