

To: Richmond Design Review Board
From: Kathleen LaLiberte and Henry Huston
Date: Sunday, May 8, 2022
Re: DRB Risi Subdivision

As adjoining property owners (HI2975), we were recently notified of a proposed two lot subdivision of 317 Old Farm Road, lot 4 of the Richmond Estates Subdivision. We are also among the eight owners of parcel HI2931, which creates the northern property line of lot 4.

We have two concerns about the proposed subdivision. Though we will be attending the 5/11 meeting, in the interest of time and clarity, we are also sending our comments in writing.

Water Issues

The Preliminary Plan Application states that a consultant has been hired to review and advise on wetlands. As we read this statement, the only area to be reviewed is the parcel itself. The DRB should be aware that there are significant water issues to the north of lot 4, as a site visit would immediately indicate.

The area to the north of lot 4 is extremely wet. Especially along the finger of land that shoots up to the east. In the upper corner of the field there is an old well/spring that's no longer used, but the spring is still very active. As water from this area flows downhill to Johnny Brook, it spreads across the conserved land and then runs through our property. Even in late summer, our meadows are often too soggy for a tractor to mow. The water eventually moves through an alder-filled area on our property, creating a significant amount of erosion.

Installing a new septic system and doing the earthwork required for building various new structures could add significantly to the existing problems. We propose that the DRB require that the wetland review area be expanded to include adjoining properties and potential water-related impacts of the subdivision.

Impact on Adjacent Conserved Land

The Preliminary Plan Application does not acknowledge the existence of HI2931, a 47-acre parcel of conserved land that forms the entire northern boundary of the 317 Old Farm Road property. This property is owned jointly by five neighboring households and would be directly impacted by the proposed subdivision.

HI2931 is owned by a group of neighbors, most of whom are adjoining landowners. We own the land in common (ownership percentages vary and are attached to our deeds), and share the tax bill, land maintenance, and decision making. HI2931 was purchased 22 years ago to protect it from development, preserve it for ongoing agricultural use and wildlife habitat, and to create a shared resource for the owners, with trails for walking, skiing, snowshoeing and spiritual refreshment.

Roughly half of HI2931 is open meadows and is half wooded. Currently, the nearest structure is the house on 317 Old Farm Road, which is set back approximately 500 feet from where it abuts the conserved land.

Proposed Parcel 4B would share its entire northern property line with the conserved land. The new house and related structures, as indicated on the plan, would be located approximately 100 feet from the property line.

The proposal acknowledges the visual impact this subdivision would have on the neighboring property to the east and proposes to “retain as much screening as possible...it is anticipated additional landscaping be placed if necessary to adequately screen the new driveway from the neighboring property.”

We request that the same consideration be given to the shared owners of HI2931. To minimize the impact on our property, existing screening should be maintained, and additional screening should be added to adequately screen the new home from the conserved land to the north.